



RHYTHM AND BLUES

*An experience and adventure
in its origin and development*

by
Lynn Ellis McCutcheon



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To Mary

"You're Part Of Me"

Foreword

RHYTHM AND BLUES was a lengthy undertaking, but it was a real labor of love. In my research I found that very little detailed material about rhythm and blues has ever found its way into print. Most of what has been published has been aimed at the white teenage market and has dealt very superficially with only a few top stars.

On the other hand, I don't see my own contribution as the "last word" on rhythm and blues. There is much information that is already irretrievably lost and much more that is yet to be discovered. For example, no one has ever pieced together the complete story of either the Drifters or the Clovers, to say nothing of the hundreds of obscure artists who have recorded since 1946. It is my wish that this book serve as a guide post for the furtherance of knowledge about rhythm and blues; as a foundation on which others will continue to build a better understanding and appreciation of the music I love.

There are many people who have contributed, in one way or another, to RHYTHM AND BLUES. I'd like to thank the many record artists, past and present, who have taken the time to talk with me; in a very real sense they are the rhythm and blues experience. I want to thank the following people for either sharing their knowledge with me or nurturing my interest: Gerald Paul, John Belmonte, Val Shively, John George, Ernie Kaschaver, Art Turco, Clive Richardson, Martin Kostelnik, and Tim Fox.

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personal collection*

Contents

Introduction.	IX
1. Common Misconceptions	1
2. Toward A Definition	19
3. Defining Characteristics	39
4. Tributaries	65
5. Pioneer Era Highlights	93
6. The Pioneer Era—Some Representative Artists	119
7. Rock 'N Roll Era Highlights	151
8. The Rock 'N Roll Era—Some Representative Artists	187
9. Soul Era Highlights	211
10. The Soul Era—Some Representative Artists	241
11. A Peek Into The Future	265
Appendix One: Selected Singles—All Time Greats	271
Appendix Two: Selected Albums—An Inex- pensive Way To Enjoy Rhythm & Blues	285
Index	297

Introduction

Rhythm and blues, in my opinion, has been ill-defined and misunderstood more than any other style of music. Therefore, since so little is known about R&B in any of its various forms, I feel I should avoid plunging directly into the history of events which shaped it. As a result, the first four chapters set the stage for a clearer understanding of the remainder of the text. Chapter one represents an attempt to dispel some longstanding myths. Having put these to rest, I have proceeded to differentiate among the various forms of R&B and to point out the ways in which R&B differs from other types of music. In chapter four I have isolated the major forces that have shaped the music.

Chapters five, seven, and nine provide a chronological account of the record companies, artists, records, and events which tell the story of rhythm and blues. Chapters six, eight, and ten focus special attention on the careers and recordings of some important rhythm and blues artists. Chapter eleven takes a look into the near future of R&B.

Appendix one is a list of recordings which constitute a core of the greatest R&B recordings of the past two decades. Disc jockeys and historians will find this list especially helpful. Appendix two is a summary of albums which will enable both the novice and the dyed-in-the-wool enthusiast to experience the sound of rhythm and blues. The selection of albums is balanced to give the listener a representative sampling of the greatest artists of the past two decades.

May, 1971

L.E.M.

Common Misconceptions

Two or three years ago, while on a record hunting trip, I happened to be in a small town in north Georgia. I stopped at the local radio station in hopes of buying some old rhythm and blues records, and while I was there I had a most interesting experience with a dee jay. As soon as I informed him of my intent he cordially struck up a conversation about R&B. He was in his mid-forties or thereabouts, and took pride in his knowledge of this type of music. He had been in radio since the late forties and claimed a familiarity with the recordings of the major R&B artists. When I asked him to recall the names of some artists; however, a three minute period of meditation produced only one name: Sam "the man" Taylor. For the benefit of the novice, Taylor played a tenor sax, didn't do any vocalization, and recorded for MGM, a label that produced very little R&B. To classify him as a major R&B artist would be highly questionable to say the least. Nevertheless, an experienced disc jockey, a man who had spent a great deal of time at a turntable, made this error.

A rare occurrence? A freak event? I think not. Similar encounters with many other disc jockeys, with radio station managers, and with various and sundry music lovers have convinced me that misconceptions about rhythm and blues are common, even among people connected with the record business. Upon remarking about my interest in the topic of rhythm and blues, a fairly typical response is as follows: "My dad has some Louis Armstrong records somewhere in our attic." When I hear

this I cringe a little, then patiently explain that Mr. Armstrong would probably prefer to think of himself as a jazz musician. While jazz and R&B both have the same historical origin, they could both be legitimately viewed as separate not only from each other, but also independent of the type of music from which they were derived. Both are outgrowths of blues, and both are firmly established on the contemporary American music scene. It is certainly not my intent to discuss jazz in this volume, but let it suffice to say that the terms rhythm and blues and jazz are far from being synonymous.

Another common misconception closely parallels the equating of R&B with jazz. I have found that many people feel that New Orleans is some sort of Mecca for R&B singers. Several people have suggested to me that a trip to New Orleans would be of great value, both in terms of records that I might find, and artists that I might interview. These people are probably confused by the city's historical ties with jazz. The fact that Chuck Berry, U.S. Bonds, and Fats Domino all made hit records in which New Orleans is mentioned, probably contributed to this myth. Certainly New Orleans was no less important to R&B than any other comparable U.S. city with a large Negro population. Most of the *name* artists have performed there at one time or another; Minit, a New Orleans-based label, has enjoyed a few successes, and Aaron Neville's *Tell It Like It Is* was done in the "Crescent City."

A similar misconception holds for Memphis. Probably because of W. C. Handy, Memphis is regarded as the home of the blues. In fact, the short-lived Home of the Blues record label was based there. Sun Records, also located there, originally made some R&B records back in

1953 when it first came on the scene, but it gradually changed to country. Today Memphis has some of the finest recording studios, and Stax-Volt Record Co. has been largely responsible for the popularization of what has become known as the "Memphis sound." While Memphis may be more important than New Orleans in terms of both quality and quantity of record output, and certainly it ranks with the major record production centers, it is by no means the most important of these.

Soundmakers, a special magazine published by Billboard, recently claimed that a majority of all types of records were made in New York, with Los Angeles, Nashville, Chicago, and Detroit next, in that order. By and large, I would say that the same order applies to the production of R&B records, with the following modifications: delete Nashville, which is essentially a country music stronghold, and add Cincinnati, Houston, Memphis, and Philadelphia to the end of the list, though not necessarily in that order. Actually, however, the list does not end here. Several other towns and cities throughout the nation have or have had small record companies that have produced some noteworthy releases. Cleveland was the home of the Champagne label, which was important, if for no other reason than the fact that it turned out the very first Moonglows' record. The Coronets, who sang the beautiful *Nadine*, reportedly made one or two records on the Cleveland-based Sterling label (circa 1955). Two other short-lived Cleveland waxerys of more recent vintage were *Studio* (circa 1960?) and *Way-Out*, with its subsidiary Big Jim (circa 1965). San Francisco had its Bay-Tone Records and Oakland the revered Rhythm label. Pittsburgh had the Robbee label, featuring the

La Rells, and no listing of that city's contributions to rhythm and blues could be justified with the omission of FeeBee Records. It was FeeBee that launched the Dell-Vikings' *Come Go With Me* and *Whispering Bells*. In Washington, D.C., the Winn label sprang up, while Columbus, Ohio was the home of Olympic Records. Esta Records of Hamilton, Ohio, produced the Columbus Pharoahs' beautiful *Give Me Your Love*. Even Denver, where country music is firmly entrenched, has turned out at least two good R&B numbers on its Finer Arts label. Turning southward, Jackson, Mississippi's Trumpet, Ace, and Buccaneer labels slowed the flow of dollars entering the coffers of the large record companies in the North. Finally, Atlanta-based Moon Records turned out a great record by the Corvetts. Naturally, this listing is by no means complete, but some other towns and cities responsible for at least one R&B producing label are: Pasadena, California; Birmingham; Central City and Louisville, Kentucky; St. Louis; Newark, New Jersey; Woburn, Massachusetts; Syracuse, New York; Nashville; Baltimore; San Diego; Des Moines, Iowa; Tifton, Georgia; and New Haven, Connecticut.

The geographical story becomes increasingly diverse if an attempt is made to pinpoint the hometowns of recording artists. Many artists recorded near home but tapes were sent off to the city where the company was headquartered. This was most likely the case with the Cashmeres, who lived in Atlanta but recorded for Chicago-based Mercury.

Still other artists were born in various southern rural towns and villages but moved to northern ghettos at an early age. Johnny C, who had a big seller with *Boogaloo Down Broadway*, was born in Greenwood, South Caro-

lina, but he now lives in Philadelphia. An even better example can be seen by looking at the lineup of the Dubs. For the benefit of the uninitiated the Dubs were one of the hottest groups of the Rock And Roll Era. Their recordings of *Could This Be Magic* and *Don't Ask Me* both soared high on the charts. The December 14, 1959 issue of *Billboard* listed their personnel and hometowns as follows: Richard Blandon—lead—Montgomery, Alabama; Cleveland Still—tenor—New York; Tommy Grate—bass—Beaufort, South Carolina; Cordell Brown—second tenor—Charlotte. Presumably three of the members moved to New York where they joined forces with Cleveland Still. In conclusion, the New Orleans—Memphis myth is nothing more than that.

Throughout this book the reader will find many references to recordings with totally unfamiliar titles; likewise concerning artists, groups, and record labels. The reason for this is a simple one; many readers have not ever heard some of these records even though they listened to the radio or went to record hops. Many of these records received little or no radio exposure. I don't think it is necessary to go into a long proof or explanation of the fact that radio does "make or break" a record. There is a great deal of evidence for this, but I will offer you this challenge: go to the nearest record shop and ask for this week's "top forty" list from your local radio station. Chances are, if you live in a well populated area, the shop will have surveys from two or more nearby stations. The question which logically follows is this: Why do some records (and, for that matter, R&B records in general) not receive enough radio exposure to make them into hits? The answer is most emphatically *not*

because they weren't *good* records. Perhaps the most widespread of all the myths surrounding R&B music is that the *good* records become popular and the *bad* ones don't. Actually this myth is common to the entire U.S. record scene, applying to country and pop tunes as well as to R&B. It has become apparent to me through countless discussions with many people that a large portion of the radio listening population is under this illusion. Undoubtedly you have at one time or another turned on your radio and heard a dee jay utter something similar to this: "You pick 'em and we play 'em, or "By popular request here's the number one song of the week." This is somehow psychologically satisfying to the listener, who feels that he is a part of the selection process. Actually, however, this is quite a distortion of the truth. The fact is that the lion's share of "hit picking" is done by a group of "experts" at Billboard and a similar group at Cashbox. Each week, from upwards of 800 new single record releases, predictions of success are made for about sixty or seventy of them. First of all it is quite possible that the "experts" don't actually review all the records released every week. It is also conceivable that not all record companies send copies to these magazines for review. Thirdly, with such a large number of discs to audit, it is easy to visualize a lot of errors. Indeed any group of people, presented with such an awesome task, might make a host of clerical or communication errors. Thus any such error might doom a *good* record to failure or elevate a "mediocre" sound to pick hit status. There are other possible sources of error in rating records, some of which have come to my attention as the result of the study of psychology. One common error has come to be known as the "halo effect." This might be defined

as a tendency to rate someone or something in the same way on unknown characteristics as on known ones. For example, a record rating "expert" might give an undeservedly high rating to a new release by the Temptations, partially on the basis of their past successes. By the same token, an artist who is not highly regarded on the bases of previous recordings might finally come through with a fine record, only to find it ignored as the consequence of a negative "halo effect." In the January 20, 1958 issue of Billboard *Lover Boy* by the Cleftones was given a rather mediocre rating of 74. The record was a lively number with the group doing a fine job of harmonization, and it sold reasonably well. In fact the company that produced it thought so highly of it that it was re-released with fair success six years later. Negative "halo effect" may have played a part in this case as the two Cleftones recordings immediately preceding *Lover Boy* were not especially noteworthy.

The trade magazine, however, aren't the only hit-pickers. Throughout the country there are a few radio stations and dee jays who are extremely influential. Not only do they capture a very large portion of the audience in their area, but they are widely imitated by other stations. Unlike many of the smaller stations they feel secure enough to exercise their own judgment in choosing records, though undoubtedly they are influenced by the trade magazines. Such jockeys as Clark Race in Pittsburgh, Rodney Jones in Chicago, Murray the K in New York, and Jerry Blavat in Philadelphia, are "big" enough to choose the records they want to play. WVON, where Jones is employed, has such a large following among ghetto dwellers that it has nearly forced another black-oriented station out of business. WVON is also unique

in that it is owned by Chess Records, and thus provides an instant outlet for the company's products.

I don't think it is too far-fetched to suggest the possibility of an influence interaction between the trade mags and trend-setting stations. It may well be that the "big" dee jays, influenced as they are by the magazines, play a record until it becomes at least a regional hit. The record raters, aware of the trends in popularity, respond to the followup to record X and other similar records by giving out higher ratings. The jockeys read the higher ratings, and the cycle continues.

It is not such a tragedy that Billboard, Cashbox, and a few trend-setting stations undertake the admittedly difficult task of rating hundreds of records each week. Actually, this could save a great deal of time for many jukebox operators and radio station program directors. The problem lies in the manner in which said ratings are interpreted by these people. I have distinctly detected an almost reverent attitude toward the record popularity charts, an attitude that leads program directors to choose new records to be added to the playlist on the basis of their position on the charts. In plain language, if the trade magazines don't like a record it may not even be heard by the radio station's program director, let alone the listening audience. I once saw a note from the program director of a station in Opelika, Alabama which was addressed to the station's dee jays. It read, "If it's not on the top forty don't play it." I had known for some time about the "you pick 'em, we play 'em" illusion, but that instance really brought the point home. What kind of choice does the listener really have when several hundred records are eliminated before they even get to him? What kind of justice is there for the artist who turns out a

good but overlooked cut? And what about the unknown songwriter who comes up with a once-in-a-lifetime potential smash hit, only to find it ignored?

My criticism, however, is not limited to the smaller stations. As I write this I have before me a copy of the October 28, 1967 edition of Billboard. A weekly feature at that time was a column in which various prominent dee jays offered advice about radio programming to any and all. The featured dee jay's comments for that week dealt in part with the playing of records not currently at the top of the heap. He conceded that new ones should be slipped in once in awhile, but concluded that it is the dee jay's duty to avoid playing from the bottom forty. To follow the advice of this respected "platter pusher" would result in a perpetuation of the existing top forty. It would become next to impossible to come up with a new hit because new hits usually have to work their way up from the bottom forty. A survey taken in late 1967 by one of the major trade magazines revealed that about 43 percent of the nation's radio stations played fewer than ten brand new singles per week on the air. About 37 percent played between 10 and 20 new ones weekly. Almost one third of the stations that responded reported that they didn't even listen to all the records that companies sent them!

The story does not end here. In other areas of business it is not necessarily the best product that becomes successful. Big sales often involve the slow, tedious process of building a good reputation. The same principle holds true in the record business, though few people seem to realize this. Just as Coca Cola, Gillette, and Bayer are almost household words, the record industry has its giants. Capitol, Columbia, RCA Victor, and a few others

enjoy tremendous prestige within the industry. It is difficult to estimate how much the mere stamp of approval from one of these companies is worth in terms of sales, but it may be a considerable amount. Fortunately, I can cite two examples that clearly illustrate the advantage that big companies have over smaller ones.

The January 6, 1958 issue of *Billboard* rated *I Wrote A Letter*, by the Serenaders on Chock Full O' Hits, less than 65. A month later MGM had purchased and reissued the same record. This time *Billboard* gave *I Wrote A Letter* a 68. The flip side, *Never Let Me Go*, was given a 72. *Been So Long*, backed with *My One And Only Dream*, by the Pastels, was originally issued by Mascot in November of 1957. When *Billboard* reviewed the disc on December 2, they gave it ratings of 65 and 76 respectively. By December, 1957 the now-defunct Argo label, once a major Chess subsidiary, had already turned out the Monotones' highly successful *Book of Love*, Clarence "Frogman" Henry's *I Ain't Got No Home* and a couple of releases by the Ravens. When a deal was made to transfer the rights to Argo it definitely meant a step upward from unknown Mascot. *Billboard* apparently saw it that way too, for they promptly pinned a 76 on the *Been So Long* side when they reviewed it in January of 1958. The record went on to achieve a considerable amount of popularity and today is regarded as one of the classic ballads of the Rock And Roll Era.

It is probably obvious to most readers that the same companies that have become *brand names* in the industry also have a lot of money. So what, you ask? Well, these companies spend more money promoting their products than the smaller ones, and why not? It pays off. They stay on top while the small companies struggle

along. Many of the little independent companies can afford to send promotional copies of their latest releases only to a few selected radio stations (when this is the case the less influential stations often don't receive copies.) Small concerns can ill afford the full page ads in *Billboard* or *Cashbox* that the big companies buy. I have been in enough radio stations that play R&B to know that few of them come anywhere close to receiving all the new releases each week. On the other hand some of the bigger companies send two or three copies in the hopes that a station will wear one out playing it. Occasionally, the companies help foot the cost of sending an artist on a tour of some of the more important radio stations. All of this combines to work against a large segment (when the little independent producers are viewed collectively) of the record industry.

I'm sure that most of my readers remember or have heard about the payola scandals of the late fifties. The investigations of the practice of paying disc jockeys to play certain records culminated in the ruination of several well-known jocks, including Alan Freed. I'm inclined to think that payola is still a fact of life in the music business and that this practice tends to discriminate against the R&B oriented company that is usually too poor to afford it.

By now the most casual reader should have some idea of what I mean when I state that the best records don't always make the charts. The serious reader will want to listen to many of the singles and albums recommended in the latter part of this volume, inasmuch as many of these were victims of the selection system I've just described.

Perhaps the most severe criticism of radio station practices in the early fifties was their widespread refusal to play any "race" records. This meant that a black artist could hope to sell a hundred thousand records whereas a million copies was not out of the question for his white counterpart. In fact, a "hundred thousand seller" was viewed as extraordinarily successful. Keep in mind that there were very few black-oriented radio stations at the time. Small wonder that few white people have ever heard of the Swallows. I have heard it said that before 1960 very few whites had heard of James Brown. He was, at the same time, widely idolized by black people for *Please, Please, Please*; *Try Me*; and several other now-famous tunes.

Today, cries of racism in the world of radio programming are still occasionally voiced, particularly by some of the nation's more prominent black dee jays. While I feel that their complaints are largely valid ones, two things are fairly obvious: The amount of overt discrimination is significantly less than it was in the early fifties; it is next to impossible to conclusively prove that there is racial discrimination in contemporary radio programming, due to the fact that nearly every station plays at least a few records done by black artists.

Another misconception touches directly on the derivation of the term rhythm and blues, and indirectly on the white man's stereotype of the Negro. Rhythm and blues does not necessarily have any better rhythm than any other music. Afro-American music is typically polyrhythmic. This means that rhythmic patterns are literally piled on top of one another. Most songs, no matter how unsoulful they may be, do have rhythm. Certainly this does not imply that blues is a music with-

out any rhythm, and that the addition of rhythm to blues constitutes rhythm and blues. All of the blues records I've ever heard had some sort of rhythm. There may be some very early, primitive blues recordings that are arhythmic or essentially so, but these are certainly the exception rather than the rule. While the term "rhythm and blues" itself may have been coined earlier, the music form came out of the thirties. Rhythm in this case referred to the loud rhythm units which were added to traditional blues numbers performed in Negro nightclubs. While the music itself was very similar the added instrumentation contributed greatly to its appeal. I think that the two forms have gradually drifted apart so that today it is easier to tell them apart. But more about this later.

A small part of the distorted picture whites have of Negroes is the idea that Negroes are born with some special sense of rhythm. I know of no evidence to support this position. There are many Negroes who can neither sing a note nor keep time. While there are many talented black musicians, this is easiest to explain by pointing the finger at our society. In the past, music has been one of the few avenues to success for blacks. While blacks were permitted access to the entertainment world, many of them were systematically exploited by greedy whites. Throughout the Pioneer Era and well into the Rock And Roll Era, it was an unwritten rule that the artist have a white manager. This was almost a necessity inasmuch as the artists often performed and recorded for white audiences and white-owned record companies. Since they often felt uncomfortable with both white people and business practices, the artists placed themselves entirely in the hands of a manager. While it would

be unfair to say that all managers were dishonest, it is certainly true that many of them made out better than the singers they represented. A recent conversation with Hal Lucas, who was a member of the world-famous Clovers, revealed one of the subtle ways in which this was accomplished. In addition to a percentage received for public performances, some managers insisted on receiving partial credit for composing songs that they never had anything to do with. Thus, they were able to collect royalties from the sale of records, a source of income that sometimes proved to be quite lucrative. In one flagrant example, a white man in his fifties was credited with the composition of lyrics that could only have been associated with the experiences of black people. The possibility, and in fact, the ease of juggling the books or making underhanded deals is one that I'm sure most readers have already anticipated. The fact is that most of the great groups of the fifties wound up destitute or with little to show for their efforts while their managers raked in the chips.

White society, while discouraging Afro-Americans from full participation in business and most of the professions, has simultaneously promoted the idea that they are at least the equal of whites musically. What would you have done back in the forties and fifties if you were an intelligent young black, seeking to get ahead in a world where the deck was stacked against you? If you didn't have the size and strength of an athlete, and were not extremely brilliant, your only chance was music. Although doors are slowly opening for blacks who wish to enter the business and professional worlds, I'm not so naive as to suggest that the situation has completely

righted itself. Blacks continue to find that their quickest path to success lies in a musical career. Thus the "born with rhythm" stereotype is perpetuated as blacks gravitate toward the kind of career that is most likely to provide them a chance to succeed. Whites notice a sea of black faces in the music world and erroneously conclude that all blacks are born with a special talent for music. A similar explanation applies to the disproportionately large number of black athletes. Sports provide men a chance to succeed on the basis of ability and not skin color. Should Negroes ever become fully accepted in our society, I predict that this imbalance will right itself in fairly short order.

Another explanation for the persistence of the "born with rhythm" misconception lies in deep-rooted cultural differences. Black kids are exposed to R&B at an early age. Singing and uninhibited dancing are encouraged. Thus it may be that the average black 8 year-old can outsing and outdance his white counterpart, but this likely reveals only the effect of more practice.

Finally, I would like to do what I can to destroy the myth that R&B is somehow a less valid form of music than classical or jazz or whatever. In researching for this book I have run across numerous books in several libraries which purport to tell the reader all about music. Invariably these volumes deal only with classical music, as though that is the only kind of music. Another part of this same phenomenon could be labeled the "good music station" concept. In asking about the possibility of obtaining old, unwanted rhythm and blues records that radio stations sometimes accumulate, I find that program directors sometimes respond to my questions with com-

ments like: "Oh, we don't play anything except good music here." Now the good music station usually plays a lot of semi-classical and classical stuff, mostly orchestral arrangements of popular songs. I know full well the connotation of the term "good music." The danger lies in the implication that rhythm and blues, country and western, and popular music forms are generally "bad music." At least one music expert has said that African music is not less "good" than European music. The former is a little more complex rhythmically and the latter a little more complex harmonically. Objectively, it is extremely difficult to label music good or bad and be certain of the validity of that judgment. The different forms of music should be evaluated, if at all, by criteria specific to each form. I like Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony" and the Diablos' recording of *The Wind*, but a comparison of the two is ridiculous. They were intended for different audiences, were written years apart, they are not of comparable length, etc. On the other hand, I unashamedly use the terms "good" and "bad" to refer to various R&B recordings. The difference is that I use these terms with the realization that in doing so I am doing no more than expressing a personal like or dislike. When used in this sense it should become evident that there are both "good" and "bad" works within the "good music" category.

No one would disagree that the last two decades have brought about great advances in science and technology. Nowhere is this more evident than in our space program. We are a nation of people that takes progress for granted. Because of this tremendous amount of progress there is an overwhelming temptation to think of music in terms of improvement over the last twenty years. While there

have been improvements in the record industry these have been of a technological nature. As examples, studios are now equipped with more tracks, and the quality of the wax is much better than it was in the fifties. But as far as the music itself is concerned I cannot buy the idea that the songs are better now, and I certainly can't see any improvement in the quality of the artists. In my opinion there are only three or four contemporary groups that compare favorably with the groups of the mid-fifties. But this is only my opinion and I'm sure there are others who would disagree.

Hopefully I have dispelled most of the more widespread myths. Now I'll begin the difficult task of defining rhythm and blues and soul music.

Toward A Definition

Not surprisingly there is a great difference of opinion on how to best define rhythm and blues and/or soul music. In fact, one author recently acknowledged this in the first sentence of the first page of a book on soul music. Several widely-read publications have devoted a great deal of energy (at least if amount of magazine space is a fair indication) to the definition of soul music. There has been a considerable amount of variability in both the nature and quality of these reports. Commonly, the opinions of famous people have been quoted with the result being conflicting definitions or no definition at all. One reputable magazine featured an entire page of pictures of various political and entertainment figures. Under each one was the caption "He's got it," or "He doesn't," referring to the soulfulness of the individual in question. Perhaps readers will be entertained and informed by a variety of comments on the nature of R&B.

Jerry Wexler, an Atlantic Records vice-president, was impressed by the realness of the music. He has felt for sometime that record fans have been subjected to "artificial music" and that the popularity swing toward rhythm and blues was inevitable.

Berry Gordy, Motown mogul, was quoted not long ago by Broadcast Music Incorporated's publication, *The Many Worlds of Music*. When asked to account for the origin of the "Motown sound" Gordy referred to it as: basically gospel because most of us involved here were raised in the church. Most of us involved here have struggled a great deal. We've had the rats and the roaches and the problems. Our sound

was never calculated technically. It is just something we feel. We've never stopped to think of it.

Rick Hall of Fame Productions in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, suggests that soul enjoys its popularity chiefly because of the type of lyrics it uses. He cites simplicity in the lyrics as the main factor that appeals to rhythm and blues fans. In addition, he points to the large number of poor people in the South, the kind of people who can easily identify with and enjoy a hard-hitting, realistic message that strikes close to home. Sue Clark, in an article she wrote for the August 16, 1969 issue of *Billboard*, saw soul music as the roots of jazz. The gradual realization that jazz is derived from soul brought about a shift in that direction. The widespread hippie movement, which focused on the simpler, more fundamental things in life, was viewed as a factor that helped precipitate the shift. In another part of the same article she defined rhythm and blues as "early soul," suggesting that the differences between the two are slight. Ed Ochs, *Billboard's* Soul Sauce columnist, in his weekly editorial for November 22, 1969, also suggested that differences between rhythm and blues and soul were minimal. In an attack against racism in the record business, he implied that soul music was just a new label tacked on to rhythm and blues.

Apart from the issue of its popularity among whites, and its points of difference and similarity with other kinds of music, some different approaches have been taken. One such philosophical outlook holds that soul is a kind of feeling that can be expressed only by those who have endured great hardship. A few go so far as to say that only those individuals who have endured the special agonies related to being black can know what soul is.

Thus soul becomes strictly a racial characteristic. Everyone knows that a "soul brother" is a Negro.

Another idea about soul is that its essence lies in *trying*. Success and failure are irrelevant; the man with soul is the one who puts his all into it. In a musical framework, this is Junior Walker "blowing his brains out" on a high note, or James Brown, down on one knee, sweat pouring from his brow. The fact that Brown and Walker are accomplished performers is beside the point. Even the least known or least successful singer has soul if he puts out a hundred percent.

Several authors have published parts of interviews they have conducted with various record artists. The following dialogues were presented because the interviewees have captured the spirit and flavor of many of the ideas cited above.

Early in December of 1969, I had the opportunity to chat with Jackie Wilson for more than an hour. One of the things we discussed was the nature of soul music; a closely related issue that we touched on was the relationship between soul and rhythm and blues.

LM: How would you define rhythm and blues?

JW: It's rock 'n' roll, it's soul music, it's pop music, it's a little bit of everything.

LM: What is it that makes it different from other kinds of music, if it is different?

JW: I would say the background.

LM: The background? How would that be?

JW: The bass would stick out and it's loud music, but it's repetitious, goes on and on, something like a heat wave, something you would just feel.

LM: How would you compare the old rhythm and blues, the early fifties style with rock 'n' roll, the late fifties, and finally with the current soul music? In what ways would they be similar and in what ways different?

JW: I've been asked that question before, Lynn, and you know it's a hard one to answer. The Motown sound is different from the Memphis sound, the Memphis sound is different from the folk sound, the folk sound is different from the Liverpool sound, so I don't know exactly how to explain it.

LM: So you think, then, that the current soul is actually a conglomeration of the Memphis sound, Motown sound, and some other things thrown in?

JW: Right. It's all thrown together.

LM: All right, let's look at it this way. In what sense does the old rhythm and blues differ from the current? Do you think they can be differentiated?

JW: Yeah, I would have to say that the old soul music didn't have a bass line. They usually used a saxophone or a piano, but nowadays it's the bass line. The bass line is out so far you can't hear anything else.

LM: In other words, the bass dominates today. I guess this would be especially true of the Motown sound.

JW: Right, with every sound today, even the Memphis.

I talked to Mike McGill of the Dells about the same topic. The edited dialogue went like this:

LM: How would you define rhythm and blues?

MM: A rhythm beat with a blues feel. I think it's what is known today as soul music, but it's really rhythm and blues. It's feeling.

LM: What are some of the elements that make it different from other forms of music?

MM: Well, It's not something you go to school for, it's something you feel within, and it's got a gospel flair to it also. It stems from the church.

LM: How would you compare the old rhythm and blues style with rock and roll, and beyond that with the current soul music?

MM: It's all the same, just a little more instrumentation, that's all.

LM: Okay, We've come to the conclusion that there isn't much real difference. Could I ask you this question? Which do you like best and why?

MM: I like today's thing better. You got more music, you got

better studios, you got more tracks. We used to record on two tracks, now you have eight and ten tracks. Better sound, better product.

LM: Apart from the equipment, how about the music itself?

MM: It's very good.

Jackie Wilson and Mike McGill, both in their late thirties, both family men, have been singing for many years. They have been an integral part of the entire rhythm and blues spectrum. There is quite a contrast between these two men, and brash young Archie Bell. In the spring of 1967 a semi-instrumental dance record swept the nation. Penned by Archie and recorded by him and his group, the Drells, it succeeded in making him a very wealthy man. A millionaire at the age of 21, his bold ideas were inspired chiefly by the contemporary music we call soul. I found him eager to express his opinions in reply to my queries:

LM: How would you define rhythm and blues?

AB: I would say rhythm and blues is the inward feeling for the outward move. In other words rhythm and blues is life itself. I think rhythm and blues has a strong effect on the people. If something happened to you, if you lost your loved one somebody might write a tune and it might have a strong effect on you just by listening, because it would relate to your condition.

LM: One of the things I hope to do in my forthcoming book is to differentiate among various forms of rhythm and blues. In your opinion what are some of the things that make rhythm and blues different from other forms of music?

AB: The lyrics, the strong meaning, the story that it tells. Today we have pop music. Pop music is mostly a happy, hand-clapping, foot-stomping thing, and rhythm and blues is something that's from the inner soul. It tells about hardships and troubled times.

LM: Okay. How would you differentiate between blues and rhythm and blues?

AB: Well, when you have tunes like the way Howlin Wolf and Lightning Hopkins do'em with just a guitar and you hear their feet patten' it's a different thing. Without the rhythm it's just flat, plain blues. When you put the rhythm in them you have the musical part. I think rhythm is a man-made thing, whereas blues just comes natural.

LM: Would you agree that rhythm and blues is commercially oriented?

AB: Right. I think it's more commercial, in a way.

LM: How would you compare rhythm and blues with rock and roll?

AB: Well, rock and roll came up during the fifties you know, and I think at the time young people were tired of sad things. They wanted to do something exciting and that's where rock and roll came in. Rhythm and blues is a little sadder but rock and roll is a party and jam and let's have a good time.

LM: Here's an idea I've come up with. See what you think of this. Do you think we could start at one end of the spectrum with blues, go to rhythm and blues, and from rhythm and blues to rock and roll, and perhaps even from rock and roll to soul music, and say that as we progress in that direction it becomes more white-oriented?

AB: Right. I think so very much. I think you really could.

LM: Okay. Could I ask you then, of the three or four different kinds, which do you like best and why?

AB: Well, an entertainer has to sort of go with what the people like.

LM: And I guess that means soul?

AB: Right They like soul, although we do a lot of rhythm and blues too.

Having viewed some introductory comments on the nature of soul, the reader is now invited to follow along as I try to arrive at some conclusions. To begin with I don't agree with all of the above comments. In addition to the reason mentioned earlier they were presented to illustrate the wide variety of opinions on the topic, and

provide the reader with some insight into the complexity of the issues.

One recent author devoted a large portion of a book on soul music to a discussion of the styles of jazz musicians Nina Simone and John Coltrane, and bluesman B. B. King. Although no direct attempt was made to define "soul," it is clear that the author was defining the term very broadly. She chose to emphasize the "feeling" dimension of soul, the element that Mike McGill likewise saw as most important. Solely from the standpoint of "feeling" there is little reason to exclude jazz and blues, or for that matter, Negro gospel, from the soul "bag." The lamentations of B.B. King or Joe Turner are just as soulful if not more so than anything put down by the Motown superstars. The same is true in the world of jazz, especially the kind played by most black musicians. Ray Charles and James Brown have both been involved in jazz, and in fact, the title of one of Ray's many albums is *Genius & Soul = Jazz*. Within this framework I see no reason why her discussion of "soul" could not have been extended to cover that which is non-musical.

I have chosen to limit the scope of my discussion (and consequently my conclusions about the meaning of soul) to music. Beyond this I have generally avoided the mention of jazz, blues, and gospel, and do not intend to include them, although I recognize their existence as art forms that are equally as legitimate as soul music. When I speak of soul music I am referring to the commercially oriented music made mostly by blacks for a consumer group that is generally under twenty-five. It contains a simplicity of lyric that sets it apart from jazz. Musically it is somewhat less complex than jazz. It differs from

gospel music primarily in that its lyrical theme is not religious. It differs from blues in that blues relies more on minor chords and sadder themes. It is similar to jazz, gospel, and blues for its feeling, and generally differs from pop music on this point. Soul is generally a type of music that generates enthusiasm. It has a very distinct, danceable beat, and the instrumentation which accompanies soul vocalizing is often greater in terms of number of instruments than can be found in blues or gospel. It differs from popular music in that vocal grunts and comments like "have mercy" or "aw right" are sometimes liberally interspersed throughout the song. It may serve as a social catalyst, a force helping to bring about solidarity among blacks. James Brown's *Say It Loud I'm Black and I'm Proud* is an excellent example. A related phenomenon is the protest song. While protest lyrics have been in vogue for awhile among white folk singers, it has only recently been put into a rhythm and blues framework. Part of the reason for this is that it takes no small amount of courage for a black man to speak out against a predominately white society. Listen to the Spinners doing *Message From A Black Man*.

The astute reader may have noted the frequent use of qualifiers in the previously mentioned comparison of soul with other kinds of music. "Mostly," "somewhat," "primarily," and "generally" were not ways of "copping out." They were included in recognition of the fact that in dealing with such a large number and variety of songs, arrangements, and artists, any abstraction is necessarily going to result in a few exceptions. Any attempt to categorize music into mutually exclusive groupings is bound to meet with more than a little difficulty. Let us try to conceptualize music for just a moment. Every piece of

music is at least a little different from every other on any given musical dimension. When we add musical pieces *ad infinitum* we wind up with an entire range or spectrum of pieces. Now if we were to arbitrarily fix cut off points at various places on the spectrum and label everything accordingly, we run into this problem: the selections near the cut off points can easily be categorized either one way or the other. As an illustration let us choose to compare popular music with soul on the dimension of feeling. On one end, there exists the record with the most intense feeling of any ever recorded. On the other end of the spectrum is the record with the least amount of expression possible. All other songs lie somewhere between. Starting at the end of least expression and progressing to the other end carries one gradually through many songs, each one containing a little more expression than the last. To divide this spectrum into pop and rhythm and blues involves fixing a cut off point. Any song with less expression than the song we have chosen at the cut off point will be designated pop while any song on the other side of the cut off will be labeled rhythm and blues. However, because of the gradual changes in "feeling" from record to record, those near the cut off point will sound like both rhythm and blues and pop. This explains why dee jays and radio programmers have so much trouble when they try to fit records into categories such as blues, pop, etc. The whole picture becomes that much more uncertain when we come to the realization that our perceptions of "feeling" vary greatly, not only from individual to individual, but within each individual from time to time. Also, it goes almost without saying that there are several different dimensions on which types of music can be compared. To summarize,

we are forced to categorize a given piece of music as interpreted by a given group of musicians and/or vocal artists, we must arbitrarily decide if said piece should be tentatively categorized as soul music on the basis of one dimension, repeat this process along the dimensional lines set forth in this chapter and the forthcoming one, and finally arrive at a decision. The final decision as to whether a piece should be categorized as soul or non-soul should thus be contingent upon all the decisions made along dimensional lines. I'm not trying to deceive the reader into thinking there is anything scientific about this kind of categorization. It is still highly subjective, but I do think that it is superior to the haphazard labeling practices of many dee jays and trade magazines. While it is possible that the trade magazines do use some sort of formula in deciding whether a record should be categorized as rhythm and blues or soul rather than pop or country and western, I am completely perplexed regarding the nature of this system. I refer the reader to *Billboard*, July 27, 1959. The "Hot Rhythm and Blues Sides" listed the following: *Tiger*—Fabian; *Like Young*—Andre Previn and David Rose; *Waterloo*—Stonewall Jackson; and *Frankie*—Connie Frances. How these recordings could be legitimately labeled as rhythm and blues is beyond me. Equally amusing examples can be found by looking at many other old editions of the trade magazines.

Before we move on to some other definitions one further analysis is in order. Recently I have heard reference to the terms "pop soul" and "stone soul." I think that these terms were originated as a result of the increased popularity in soul music. Cross-cultural comparisons of word usage frequently reveal some interest-

ing facts. For example, in the Arabic language there are about six thousand words associated in one form or another with "camel." Similarly there are many different words for "snow" among Eskimos. The inference to be drawn here is that the more frequently the occurrence of an object in a given culture the more likely it is that a large number of words will be required to describe that object. As soul music becomes more popular it is quite likely that new words will be coined to describe soul in its several facets. But returning to the terms I mentioned a moment ago, "pop soul" refers to any rhythm and blues recording that does well on the pop charts. Generally those that make the rhythm and blues top ten do reasonably well on the pop charts. Marvin Junior and Chuck Barksdale of the Dells talked with me about the charts.

MJ: As you may remember there were two sets of charts (back in the fifties).

LM: The rhythm and blues charts and the...

CB: and the pop charts

MJ: Right, and like now I think it's wrong to say rhythm and blues and pop, because every record that reaches the top ten rhythm and blues also goes very high pop, so I don't think they can put a classification on it, I really don't.

CB: They put a title on us, the last year and a half. We used to be a soul group, now we're a "pop soul" group.

We didn't explore the "pop-soul" idea any further at that time but I would like to at this point. While I have defined "pop-soul" in terms of "making the pop charts" there is an underlying notion connected with it. Most of "pop-soul" records are done by black artists that have a light, easy-for-white-ears-to-listen-to-approach. By this I mean that they make relatively little use of Afro-sounding vocal elements (with the exception of falsetto), they

sing songs about love and other universal topics, and they emphasize harmony rather than rhythm, etc. "Pop-soul" artists include the Dells, as Chuck Barksdale mentioned, Miracles, Temptations, Stevie Wonder, Supremes, Aretha Franklin, and sometimes Ray Charles. These and a few others are fairly consistent at hitting the pop charts.

"Stone" soul, on the other hand, is nearly the opposite. This term refers to the "pure" stuff, very black sounding, very hard for whites to listen to. James Brown best exemplifies this earthy approach. Other artists in this "bag" include Wilson Pickett (usually), and any of the other artists usually thought of as blues men. I suppose that the term "funky" should also be given brief mention. Originally the term was used by Negroes to mean "foul-smelling." I believe that the odor referred to here was equivalent to what whites call body odor. Sometimes it was associated with the odors of sexual intercourse and at other times with womanhood in general. The old "Funky Woman" song, known by many but usually sung only at bars and stag parties, illustrates my point. In recent years "funky" has acquired a kind of soulful meaning. In fact I don't see any difference between "stone" and "funky" soul. There have been several "funky" dance records produced in 1969 and 1970. The title of one of these, *Everything I Do Is Gonna Be Funky*, has become a sort of password among blacks. "Funkiness" is by no means limited to tunes in which the term appears in the title or even the lyrics. James Brown's "popcorn" dance records could also be described as "funky." Although there is a "Funky Chicken," a "Funky Drummer," and several other "funkies" it seems to me that they all have at least one thing in

common: they all sound very black; all emphasize rhythm more than harmony; all are heavy with soulful utterances; and all generally fit the description of "stone" soul.

What, then, is rhythm and blues? We have already viewed the opinions of some who equate rhythm and blues with soul music. Is that all there is to it? Some additional comments about the nature of rhythm and blues are in order before I attempt to formulate my own answer. Don Robey, president of Duke-Peacock Records was once asked to compare blues with rhythm and blues for BMI's Summer, 1969 issue of *The Many Worlds Of Music*. His answer: "I don't believe there's any difference between blues and rhythm and blues; it's just that what we release, by the time it gets to New York (from Houston, Texas), it's something else. Sometimes it's even called "folk music." In this same issue a reference was made to the large number of rhythm and blues groups that cropped up in the late forties and early fifties. Author Don Heckman called these "The gospel-tinged blues groups."

Leroi Jones, in his *Blues People*, expressed several ideas about the beginning of rhythm and blues and the direction in which it has gone since that beginning. One of these will be explored in greater depth in a later chapter. Another was the notion that rhythm and blues was simply a new title applied to the same old Negro music that had existed for some time. According to Jones, participation in World War II had helped instill racial pride in American Negroes. As a result they resented the term "race" that was applied to any record done by a Negro artist prior to the war. Thus the substitution.

Charles Keil, in *Urban Blues*, divided all blues styles into four main categories. These divisions were Country, City, Urban, and Soul. Keil portrayed rhythm and blues as a sub-type within the Soul division. He saw it as being characterized by "blues band accompaniment, novelty lyrics," and "some non-blues forms." Keil placed in the rhythm and blues group "any artist who reaches a wide, predominantly Negro audience using a relatively unadorned blues sound." His concept of rhythm and blues as a type of soul music is curious, inasmuch as the reader has already witnessed the fact that many see this situation as being reversed. He recognized the existence of vocal groups but labeled the Radiants as a "doo-wah" type group along with the Flamingos and Swallows. One is tempted to suspect that the author never actually listened to any vocal group records. In fact, most of the book deals with a few well-known contemporary blues personalities.

While no amount of print is likely to lead to a universally accepted definition, I think that at least part of the confusion can be cleared up. The observant reader may already have noticed that just as "soul" can be defined narrowly (commercial, black-oriented, contemporary, etc. music) or broadly (a "feeling," the expression of emotion) so can rhythm and blues. On the other hand, "soul" is usually defined rather narrowly while rhythm and blues is often defined both narrowly and broadly, and frequently by the same writer. In fact, I readily admit my guilt on this point. One writer, in an article of some import, mentioned such well-known "soul stars" as the Miracles, the Impressions, the Temptations, Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, and the Supremes while at the same time labelling their music as

rhythm and blues. He concluded his discussion of the sixties with a statement about "the fifty years of rhythm and blues." Obviously, the writer has used the term very broadly in each of these two instances. He has implied that it covers nearly the entire range of black music. On the other hand, he also used the term to refer to the music turned out by black groups in the early fifties.

On several occasions I have taken some discs made in the early fifties into my psychology classrooms as a way of introducing white college students to subcultural differences and psychological defense mechanisms. On one such occasion, I spent many hours going through my collection in an attempt to find records with lyrics that would clearly illustrate such concepts as repression, rationalization, regression, compensation, etc. The records I came up with were representative of a fifteen year span extending from 1952 to 1967. I already knew that my students liked soul music, and I had worked hard to get everything in order. I walked into the classroom fully expecting an overwhelmingly favorable response, but I was to suffer a mild disappointment. I found that the newer releases were appreciated much more than the older ones. Students were either completely indifferent or showed dislike for such old greats as Wynonie Harris, the Checkers, and the Diablos. Those who worshipped the Temptations and Aretha Franklin were generally contemptuous of any record I played that was more than three or four years old. Similar observations with subsequent psychology classes have led me to conclude that students easily perceive age differences in the records although they can't always verbalize such differences. Now if the uninitiated can respond differentially, thor-

oughly enjoying the one while rejecting the other, surely such differences go beyond mere labeling practices. These differences are real. The fact that they are difficult to verbalize makes them no less a reality. In fact, it is my contention that rhythm and blues in the narrow sense, referring to the music of the late forties and early fifties, differs from rock 'n' roll (of the late fifties and early sixties) and that they both differ from contemporary soul music.

From this point on I will use the term "rhythm and blues" to encompass the three major eras. To avoid confusion I will use the term "Pioneer Era" to describe R&B music of the decade between 1946 and 1956. Although Pioneer Era styles differed somewhat, lyrics tended to be about love and related topics. Both slow ballads and quicker-tempoed tunes tended to be of low volume, especially as compared to later black music. These same up tempo recordings would be considered slow by more current standards. Listen to *Gee*, a big hit for the Crows in 1953. Not only would it be thought of as slow by today's record buying public, but I'm sure they would think of it as "soft," especially as compared to the loud raucous rock music of today. Harmony was also more important. It was not to see so much importance again until some of the "sweet" Motown groups of the mid-sixties revived an interest in it. Many of the tunes done in the early fifties were old standards like *I Only Have Eyes For You*, *I Cover The Waterfront*, and *Red Sails In The Sunset*. Orchestration was limited, a factor which undoubtedly contributed to the low volume so uncharacteristic of later music. Many of these old standards were done in a style which could be conceptualized by imagining what a Negro barbershop quartet would sound

like if backed by a small band consisting only of a piano, drums, and sax (and perhaps one non-electric guitar).

Even the so-called "shouters," those in the Roy Brown-Wynonie Harris-Joe Turner tradition were not really loud as compared with the Beatles, Rolling Stones, etc. Most of those shouters were actually blues men who attempted to commercialize their music. They were of a breed somewhat apart from the vocal quartets and quintets that began to dominate the Pioneer Era.

The Rock And Roll Era saw so many whites involved that the music could no longer be thought of as exclusively black. In fact, there were a host of white artists and groups turning out rock 'n' roll which was nearly indistinguishable from that produced by black artists. Furthermore, it was designed to appeal primarily to white teenagers whereas black adults frequently bought rhythm and blues records. As a result, the lyrics, while still dealing with topics like love, became increasingly inane. Many rock 'n' roll records featured a "break" in the middle, during which vocalization stopped and instrumentation became louder. The emphasis on harmony and voice quality, prevalent during the preceding era, steadily waned as the use of echo chambers, increased volume, electric guitars, and other gimmicks increased. Negro vocal elements (grunts, cries, exclamations) appeared about as often as they had in the preceding era, but less frequently than in the "Soul" era. The Rock And Roll Era began about late 1955 and lasted until about 1963. Recently, there has been a minor revival of interest in rock 'n' roll, sparked by such white groups as the Sha Na Na (whose name was taken from a phrase of a popular rock 'n' roll ballad), but few blacks have been

involved in the movement.

You may have noticed that the dates I gave overlapped a little. Once again the explanation for this is that we are dealing with an entire spectrum of music, and that extensive changes in styles do not occur overnight. As the influence of the Pioneer Era slowly died out, the seeds of rock 'n' roll were already beginning to sprout. That is to say that the pioneer sound existed side by side with rock 'n' roll for a short period, just as rock 'n' roll overlapped slightly with soul music. For that matter, as Leroi Jones pointed out, the blues has existed alongside the entire rhythm and blues continuum for many years. Billboard has never made any distinctions between the terms rhythm and blues, rock 'n' roll, and soul. Through the years there has been only one chart for black music, whereas white music has been categorized as popular, country, and classical.

Because the three basic R&B styles that I mentioned consisted of several different elements there was another kind of overlap. Some records are difficult to classify as belonging either to the Pioneer Era or the Rock And Roll Era because they contain elements of both. For example, listen to *Roll On* by the Lamplighters on Federal. It has no gimmicks, both lead voice Thurston Harris (became famous for his recording of *Little Bitty Pretty One*) and his backing (Willie Rockwell, Alfred Frazier, and Matthew Nelson) sing very well. The instrumental backing is sparse enough that the group can easily be heard. All these characteristics suggest that the record be filed under the earlier era. A little research reveals that it was released in February of 1955; one of the transitional years. Sure enough, a break occurs in the middle of the song as the sax player struts his stuff, just as happens in many recordings of the Rock 'n' Roll Era.

Who Knows Better Than I was probably released in the fall of 1957 on the Eldorado label (it was also on the Standard label). It was a slow ballad by Ruby Whitaker and the Chestnuts, with an echo effect and a great deal of "doo wah wah-ing." Yet no instrumental break appears at any point in the song.

Another interesting record is *Flash 109*. This release featured a group known as the Jayhawks doing the original version of the rock 'n' roll standard *Stranded In The Jungle*. Meanwhile, back on the flip side was *My Only Darling*, a low-keyed ballad definitely in the tradition of the Pioneer Era.

Finally I will readily admit that there are some anachronisms. An anachronism is something that appears either before or after its time. There have been a number of records that have been seemingly outdated even as they were released. I can recall listening to an "oldies" show on Pittsburgh radio about three years ago, and hearing for the first time *Let Me Love You*. The Eldorados had once done a tune called *A Fallen Tear* back in 1956, and I thought this was a followup. Imagine my surprise on finding out that *Let Me Love You*, by George Goodman and the Headliners, was actually a new release. Another example, which may be more familiar to most readers, is that of Eddie Holman's hit record *This Can't Be True*. Sounding more like rock 'n' roll than a soul sound, it was a minor success as recently as the winter of 1965-66.

Defining Characteristics

In this chapter I shall attempt to set forth some very general statements about what rhythm and blues is and what it is not. The points that differentiate R&B from other forms of music can be subsumed under five broad headings. Where applicable, I will attempt to compare R&B with rock and roll, soul, pop, and blues. It is hoped that these comparisons will enable the reader to get a clearer picture of the continually moving mainstream of rhythm and blues music.

1. Groups

R&B is frequently (though not always) a vocal group effort. Vocal blues, on the other hand, is essentially a one-artist form. Many blues artists are accompanied by loud, raucous bands, but the vocalization itself is performed by one individual. In fact, when blues artists first began singing to the accompaniment of a band back in the late twenties, the term "rhythm and blues" was coined to differentiate between the older, more primitive form and the "big band" blues. Today, however, we tend to combine both under the heading of blues. For example, Buddy Guy, B.B. King, and Jimmy Reed are regarded as bluesmen rather than R&B artists, though according to the "nineteen twentyish" definition they would have been placed in the latter category.

A lot of contemporary recordings that legitimately fall under the heading of R&B carry the name of only one vocalist. This is seemingly a direct contradiction of the concept just introduced, namely, that R&B tends

toward vocal groups rather than one artist. A reconciliation of the ideas presented in these apparently conflicting statements can be found in the fact that many "one-artist recordings" are actually done by more than one vocalist. I often find in auditing both new and old discs that record companies print the name of Johnny so-and-so on the label but completely neglect his "supporting cast." Certainly, it is not a rare occurrence to find the following invariably in small print: "accompanied by orch. and chorus." Perhaps the most striking example of the former occurred in 1965, when Chess released a tune by Jackie Ross entitled *Take Me For A Little While*. This rendition sounds very much like an imitation of the Supremes. There are at least two other girls helping out Jackie Ross in much the same fashion that Diana Ross was supported by the other two members of the Supremes. The point is that Chess might just as well have billed their group as "Jackie Ross and the Magnolia Blossoms," or maybe as just the "Magnolia Blossoms." Some other artists whose names have appeared alone on records but depend to some extent on a vocal background are: Sonny Fulton, Jesse Belvin, Aretha Franklin, Marvin Gaye, Freddie Scott, Stevie Wonder, Timothy Wilson, Etta James, Percy Sledge, Wilson Pickett, and Gene Chandler.

There are a few exceptions to the general rule that R&B exclusively involves vocal groups. Two of the most notable are Johnny Ace and Donnie Elbert. Even so, a reissue of Ace's greatest hit, *Pledging My Love*, finds some female voices providing a background. Donnie Elbert used a vocal background on *My Confession of Love*, though he sang alone on many of his other records. In my opinion, both of these singers, as good as they

were, would have sounded better if a little vocal background were used on their recordings.

The fact that R&B is often a vocal group effort does not, of course, help distinguish it from either rock and roll or pop music. The Gaylords, Four Lads, Lettermen, and McGuire Sisters all exemplify the role of the group in popular music, while Bill Haley and the Comets, the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Buckingham are all essentially rock and rollers. Incidentally, until quite recently most of the "neo-rock and rollers" could be easily identified without even having to listen to their songs, a situation which I found to be highly desirable. The tip-off was the group's name. It took only a few brief experiences with weird names like the "Electric Grape Juice Experience" or the "Raspberry Toilet Bowls" to extinguish my listening behavior. On the other hand, the Mad Lads are a Memphis-based outfit with a very soulful delivery, and December, 1968 marked the record debut of The 125th Street Candy Store. In spite of the latter group's name, their music is delightfully soulful. Actually, a cue to their style is evident if one considers the fact that 125th Street is in the very heart of Harlem. Should this trend continue we may find R&B groups with names like "The Rat-Infested Tenement Dwelling," or the "Watts Happening."

2. Instrumentation

Instrumentation provides another basis for comparing R&B with other kinds of music. As compared with popular music from the early and mid-fifties, R&B enjoyed the use of relatively few instruments. Some of the popular "name" bands and orchestras were still on the scene. Les Brown's Band of Renown backed up some of the vocalists of the day and Hugo Winterhalter had a

well-polished orchestra. In general, the major record companies were able to procure some fine talent in support of their top "crooners" and "thrushes." In the meantime, the Orioles, Ravens, Four Buddies and others were supported by equally talented but frequently smaller, unknown bands.

It is not too difficult to draw conclusions regarding the Rock 'n' Roll Era. An expansion of the number of instruments used in rock 'n' roll recordings culminated in the use of strings on Drifters' recordings in 1959.

During the Soul Era both R&B and pop have featured louder instrumental volume coupled with a heavy, distinctive use of percussion instruments. Some of the avant-garde pop musicians have experimented with bizarre instruments while the inclination among "soul" artists to follow suit has been somewhat less. The Beatles, for example, have used the sitar and the calliope. In fact, it has often seemed to me that pop rock stars have been trying to see who can produce the weirdest sound, both with conventional and unconventional instruments. In spite of a few strange-sounding offerings by the Dells, the Temptations, Sly and the Family Stone, and perhaps a couple of others, the soul people have shied away from this trend.

On the blues scene there has also been a progressive move toward slightly bigger bands. Noted blues man Albert King did a concert not long ago in which he was supported by—are you ready for this?—The St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. While I'm not willing to conclude that this is an indication of a new trend, nonetheless, it is extremely interesting. The rising popularity of the electric guitar has probably been the most significant development on the blues scene, however. In fact, the

same young college students who have recently "discovered" B.B. King, Bukka White, *et. al.* don't particularly like the older, non-electric blues although they are very similar in most respects.

Instrumentation also enables a meaningful differentiation between R&B as it was in the forties and fifties with rock 'n' roll and soul music. Some instruments are common to all three forms but their role has changed considerably. An example of this changing function can be found in the use of the drum. Throughout the late forties and until at least the mid-fifties the drum was used primarily to keep time. Subdued drumming served about the same purpose as a slightly amplified metronome would have on many of these recordings. Interestingly enough, even uptempo arrangements did not provide enthusiastic drummers with an excuse to steal the spotlight away from the vocalists. These "jumps," as they were known, were characterized by much the same drum volume as the slower-tempoed ballads. By contrast, drumming is usually more prominent and frequently fancier on contemporary soul recordings. Listen to these older recordings: *With All Your Heart*—Five Royales, *Gee*—Crows, *Nadine*—Coronets. Compare the drumming with these more modern sounds: *Heaven Must Have Sent You*—Elgins, *Break Your Promise*—Delfonics, *Get On Up*—Esquires.

Contrast the increased role of the drum (no pun intended) in contemporary R&B recordings with the decline in use of the piano. On many of the songs from the early fifties, the piano played a major role. At that time, nearly all of the Dootone Record Company releases featured a clearly distinguishable piano background. That Dootone certainly didn't have a monopoly on this kind

of instrumentation can be readily witnessed by listening to: *Sally Walker*—Counts—Dot; *Heaven Is The Place*—Quails—Deluxe; *A Year And A Day*—Barons—Decca; and *It's A Miracle*—Capris—Gotham. All of the Spaniel's known recording sessions for Vee Jay (1953-1958) featured bands that included a pianist. By contrast, the piano has virtually disappeared from the recorded tunes of the Soul Era.

Before the reader comes to the hasty conclusion that the decline in the use of the piano was a part of an overall decline in the use of instruments, I would say that the reverse is probably true. That is, the number of instruments per record has increased since at least as far back as the early fifties. In fact, Johnny Carter, who was a member of the original Flamingos, and who has been with the Dells for several years, thinks that the addition of instruments is the major difference between the rhythm and blues of the fifties and that of the current decade.

The first Spaniel's recording session was May 5, 1953. From this session came *Baby It's You* and *Since I Fell For You*, two of this group's finest waxings. Yet the band consisted only of a drum, tenor sax, and piano. On other sessions, the band consisted of only four or five instruments. Some of the other early groups who also were backed by few instruments were: The Castelles; Prisonaires; Four Buddies and Jayhawks. A survey of the first six years of Fortune Record Co. revealed that on nearly all their releases the accompaniment was limited to four or five instruments. The Vibranares' beautiful recording of *Doll Face* on Afterhours was backed by the Eddie Swanton Quintette. Both the Five Satins and the Cadillacs made a record in which there was no instrumental ac-

companiment at all.

I think there are good reasons for the trend toward big band background for vocalists. First, the realization that R&B is an outgrowth of the blues. So what you say? Well merely that blues, in its purer pre-electric form, usually involved just one instrument. Frequently, it was a guitar played by the soloist. As an outgrowth of this basic musical form, it is logical to expect that early rhythm and blues would share many of its characteristics.

Throughout the course of the last two decades, it is easy to detect a trend away from the old, primitive kind of blues toward the more polished sound of contemporary soul music. Nowhere is this trend made more evident than in two articles appearing in the August 25, 1968 Sunday magazine of the Detroit Free Press. The first of these is written by the eminent author, Paul Oliver, who reminisces about the old blues artists who appeared from time to time on Detroit's Hastings Street. The second article laments the passing, not only of Hastings Street, but also of the blues. It features comments by Joe Von Battle, a ghetto record shop owner and composer of *I Am In Love*. (This song was recorded by the Five Jets for the Deluxe label back in 1954.) Von Battle's commentary concerns the fact that at one time blues records were quite popular among Detroit's black citizenry but that that day has long gone. Blues musicians have trouble getting jobs now, while Berry Gordy's horde of gaudily-clothed, youthful performers are raking in the proverbial chips.

The point to all this is that just as we have witnessed a trend away from blues, so we can also discern a departure from many of the characteristics of blues. The movement

toward bigger and louder musical accompaniment is merely one case in point.

Leroi Jones talks about the origin of R&B in *Blues People*, mentioning that it started in the thirties as a kind of reaction against the traditional one instrument blues. He portrays it as a loud, big band, shouting variety of the blues, so named because of large rhythm sections that backed the vocalist. Thus, it would seem that what Jones has to say is contradictory to what I am saying. To some degree there is a contradiction. Jones was right in his analysis of the origin of the music that was first called rhythm and blues. It was indeed a loud, raucous, big band sound. It was popular among Negroes of the lower class, just as R&B is today. From this shouting-styled blues have come such greats as "Hot Lips" Page, Wynonie Harris, Joe Turner, and "Bullmoose" Jackson. Perhaps it could even be said that Junior Walker, although he has come along much more recently, is best categorized with these earlier figures. Jones' biggest error in portraying R&B in the forties and fifties was his omission of the influence of other factors on the music. He saw the R&B of the fifties as simply a continuation of early R&B. I will deal with factors that influenced R&B later, but one of these is especially relevant here. I refer to the fact that certain Negro vocal groups were permitted into the mainstream of "white" American music. These groups both modified and were in turn modified by their privileged status. They won admirers among both blacks and whites. Probably the two best examples were the Inkspots and the Mills Brothers. The fact that these groups met with some measure of success in the "big-time" prompted much imitation among blacks. I feel that it is to this factor, more than to any other, that we owe the

appearance of many of the groups of the early fifties. Theirs was a "whiter," quieter kind of music. It would be incongruous to back the Inkspots with a large, blaring rhythm section. Perhaps it could be argued that the R&B of the thirties was as loud and involved as much instrumentation as contemporary R&B. But it is the fifties that I choose as a base point for comparison with contemporary music. Leroi Jones' big band blues was on the wane during the early fifties while vocal groups in the softer Inkspots tradition were on the increase in both numbers and popularity. Thus, as compared with the early fifties variety, the sound of soul is louder and more likely to be backed by larger bands.

A growing body of evidence suggests another quite practical reason for the fact that there is increased instrumentation in R&B today. I suspect that in many cases, the small, Negro oriented record companies of the fifties could simply not afford to hire as many musicians as they would have liked. There were many of these small companies, each motivated by the thought of getting rich on a big smash hit. In the meantime, most of them pinched pennies and struggled along while the more unfortunate ones folded. One of the most thought-provoking pictures I have ever seen was a photo of the Fortune Record Company recording studio. It shows what looks like a dingy, old barn or garage, devoid of nearly everything except a piano and one microphone. A pile of what appears to be trash is stacked in one corner. It is amazing that so many beautiful songs were recorded in such miserable surroundings. That this was the case is a lasting tribute to owners Jack and Devora Brown, and such groups as the Diablos, Five Dollars, Swans, and Earthquakes.

Contrast this, if you will, with the current music scene. The Motown success story points to a multimillion dollar business. The Gamble-Huff songwriting team and their record company is reportedly hauling in a lot of loot. The people at Memphis-based Stax Records are also making big money.

In support of this same point regarding finances, I feel compelled to relate an interesting anecdote. I was visiting a fellow record collector who was entertaining me with some items from his collection. At one point, he called my attention to the instrumentation on a record, suggesting that there was something unusual about it. I listened for awhile but was unable to discover anything extraordinary and told him so. He then asked me to concentrate on the bass guitar. I did so, but once again couldn't find anything unusual. Finally, he told me that the bass guitar was really a male voice disguised to sound like the instrument. The point, of course, was that economics prompted the decision to attempt this harmless bit of deception. It was so effective that only by greatly increasing the volume and listening closely could it be detected. The question that arises is: How many other times was this same little trick pulled off? The realization that this occurred at all leads to the thought that R&B bands of the early fifties, small as they appeared to be, may have actually been smaller than they appeared on record.

Another situation showing the financial problems of the smaller R&B labels and the possible effect on the size of the band employed is occasionally evident in cases where an artist or group goes from a rhythm and blues label directly to a major company. One of the best examples of this occurred when the Five Keys

switched from Aladdin to Capitol. The Capitol recordings usually featured the orchestras of either Howard Biggs or Dave Cavanaugh, whereas no orchestra was cited on the Aladdin releases. Careful auditing revealed the number of orchestral pieces to be slightly larger on the Capitol releases.

The trend toward louder instrumentation in R&B recordings may or may not have been paralleled by similar increases in both blues and pop music. In fact, I suspect that many contemporary white rock bands are very loud in order to divert the listeners' attention from the terrible vocalization.

On the other hand, I'm not so sure that pop music has undergone a change in the direction of more instrumentation. In fact, I think it is reasonable to entertain the possibility of a slight decrease. Whereas Pat Boone, the Four Lads, etc., were backed by an orchestra, today's pop heroes are frequently heard amidst the din created only by a drum and a couple of amplified guitars. I have recently found evidence suggesting that the tremendous volume created by electrified instruments may have established a new trend. Today's teenagers have found pop lyrics so imbedded in a cacophony of sound that not only don't they understand the lyrics but many of them have ceased to try. An article that appeared in the October, 1969 issue of *Psychology Today* supports my contention. The authors presented results and interpretation of a music survey conducted in two of Michigan's larger school districts. Seven popular songs were selected for special attention in that the high schoolers were asked to relate the meaning of the lyrics. In no case did as many as 50% of the 770 students who took part actually understand the theme. In fact, only 17% under-

stood the theme of one of the songs. The authors concluded that a large majority of the students were more interested in a record's sound than its message.

The mention of amplified guitars brings us to another topic: the use of electronics in differentiating among music forms. Few would argue that electronic instruments, gadgets, and sound effects play an ever increasing role in pop music. Furthermore, pop music has always been in the forefront in this area. Remember those records by the Chipmunks? And how about the Buchanan and Goodman-type novelty records? Today we have moog synthesizers, quaint-sounding oriental guitars, and far-out "psychedelic" echo effects in addition to the aforementioned electric guitars. However, there hasn't been much in rhythm and blues that qualifies as unusual sound effect, both during the fifties and today. A few exceptions are especially noteworthy. The Dells' release of *Please Don't Change Me Now/Wear It On Our Face* on Cadet was a rather pleasant blend of soul with some psychedelic effects. An earlier use of sound effects transformed the Beltones' otherwise mediocre *I Talk To My Echo*, into a recording of great beauty. The deft manipulation of the "on again—off again" echo effect by VJ sound engineers greatly enhanced the Eldorados' *There In The Night*.

3. Feeling

For the past several years, middle class-oriented magazines have been speculating about this thing called soul. Some of them have concluded that soul is one thing while others have been quick to call it something else. Some writers have said that soul is a black-only phenomenon and others have pointed out examples of soulful whites. Personally, I don't think that blackness is neces-

sarily soulfulness, but the sub-cultural experience of the black man in America probably contributes to a soulful outlook. Whatever the disagreements about the preciseness of any definition of soul, and whatever its relation to race, most people agree that it has something to do with the expression of emotion. It is the kind of song that is sung with feeling. In fact, it is not the kind of song that counts at all but the way in which it is delivered. Even if you've never heard the Miracles do *Tracks Of My Tears* you can bet that their version doesn't sound like Johnny Rivers' version. Nor does Ray Charles' *Yesterday* bear much resemblance to the original recording by the Beatles.

It is the outpouring of emotional expression that to my mind constitutes the most crucial element separating R&B from white pop music. This is not to say that some popular songs by white artists are done totally without expression, but to recognize that emotion is generally more noticeable in the R&B style. Pursuing this further, it could even be said that emotional expression pervades it, it is an integral part of it. Comparing soul with the R&B of the early fifties on this dimension leaves us little to choose between. While other differences between the older and newer R&B forms are fairly obvious, soulfulness is common to both. The same kind of examples just cited in connection with soul music are equally applicable in comparing pop music with the rhythm and blues of the Pioneer Era. Bing Crosby's *White Christmas* differs greatly from that of the Drifters. Nor does the fantastic rendition of *September Song* done by the Ravens on Mercury sound much like the various versions of white artists that have sung this classic from time to time. Listening to the Bing Crosby—Perry Como—Andy Williams—

Frank Sinatra types leaves me with the impression that they have great voices and are well-trained. I also get the impression, both from hearing them and watching their faces, that they simply don't care one way or another about the song they are singing. In short, I'm left with the idea that they wouldn't sing at all if they weren't being so well paid. I'm not really knocking this style. Most people like a sterile, velvet touch. What I'm saying is that it is quite different from R&B in which many of the vocalists haven't the smooth professional sound of a Bing Crosby, but somehow convey the importance of the songs' lyric. Where they may not have had the professional training of a Sinatra, they make up for it by doing the song in such a way that it seems like a personal affair. One veteran blues artist bluntly summarized what I'm trying to say when he was recently asked about the ingredients necessary to whip up a batch of the blues. His reply was something to the effect that: "...you gotta have had some troubles in your lifetime, and you gotta know what that segregation shit is all about."

I believe that during the Rock And Roll Era emotional involvement dropped to a bare minimum. Many of the trite "moon in June" lyrics that critics were quick to denounce came from this era. In passing, I might add that these same critics were all too ready to see "moon in June"-ness as a characteristic of all rhythm and blues. Some of the biggest hits from the Rock And Roll Era simply don't compare with contemporary R&B for emotional fervor. Examples? How about *I Remember (In the Still of the Night)* by the Five Satins, or *One Summer Night* by the Danleers? Both were big sellers but neither was very emotional. To be sure rock 'n' roll generated some excitement, but this was more a function of the

volume, the fast beat, and the throbbing of amplified guitars than the lyrics. Chuck Berry's records typify what I mean. Apart from the instrumental portion of the record it is rather difficult to get worked up over the straightforward vocal delivery and innocuous lyrics of *Johnny B. Good* or *Sweet Little Sixteen*. Why the lessened emotional involvement in rock 'n' roll? Probably due to the fact that rock 'n' roll was a diluted form of R&B, diluted to gain wider appeal with white record buyers. Diluted, in many cases, by whites who were thus enabled to participate as artists as well as listeners. The Mello Kings, Skyliners, Fascinators, and Earls were on a par with most of the better black rock 'n' roll groups.

4. Lyrics

What can be said about the R&B lyric? Does it differ from that of the popular song? Might it differ depending on when it was originated? The first question was raised merely as an introduction. Obviously, I intend to write something about such an important part of the music. The second question requires a lengthy and somewhat uncertain answer. The answer to the third question is a definite yes.

I think that it should be obvious to the most naive reader that pop music lyrics are not totally different from R&B lyrics. This is because in many instances they are one and the same. The term "cover," which was widely used in trade journals in the mid-fifties, best illustrates this point. A "cover" took place when a white singer did a white-oriented version of a song done previously by a black artist. Examples include: *Sh-Boom*—Chords—Cat, popularized by the Crewcuts on Mercury; *Hearts of Stone*—Jewels—R&B, popularized by the McGuire Sisters on Coral; *Since I Met You Baby*—Ivory Joe Hunter—

Atlantic, a song that sold quite well when recorded by Pat Boone for Dot Records. The November 8, 1952 edition of *Billboard* reported that Amos Milburn's success with a song called *Greyhound* had prompted two pop artists to try recording it. Ultimately, I believe at least three "covers" appeared, including one by the great Wynonie Harris. It is only fair to add that blacks have successfully "covered" songs originally done by white artists. Among these include: *I Only Have Eyes For You*, a song originating from an old movie and recorded both by the Swallows and Flamingos; *Heart and Soul*, the old classic which was done by the Four Buddies in 1951 and by the Spaniels in 1958; and *Stormy Weather*, another classic that has been revived by at least four R&B groups.

Also, black artists whose styles were better received by the white record-buying public often "covered" the songs of the more blues-oriented black performers. Perhaps the best example involved Hank Ballard and the Midnighters whose *The Twist* was nearly the same as Chubby Checker's version. The ensuing battle over who actually wrote the Chubby Checker version resulted in a courtroom decision in favor of the latter. A less well-known example found the Orioles covering the Charioteers version of *A Kiss and A Rose*. Still another black "cover" situation involved a tune entitled *Dedicated to the One I Love*. This title may sound familiar to many readers, and indeed it should be, since it was a big hit in 1961 for a group of girls known as the Shirelles. The Shirelles, for those who don't recall, had a very innocent, straightforward style. In fact, if you didn't know they were black you probably wouldn't guess. Few people were aware that the song was written by Lowman Paul-

ing and originally recorded by his group, the Five Royales, shortly before the Shirelles recording. The Five Royales were a veteran male group from Winston-Salem, N.C. Their style had its roots deep in the down-home blues country where they were raised. Predictably, the "bleached" Shirelles' version easily outsold its competition. The interesting thing about this example of "covering" is that, given the same situation today, the bluesier Five Royales' version might well be the one to succeed. Before I leave this point I would like to state that "covering" still occurs (though less often than it did in the fifties and early sixties) in spite of opinions to the contrary. This is particularly true if the term is so broadly interpreted as to span a year or two in time. Johnny Rivers, a white artist with a contemporary rock-a-billy flair, has covered *Tracks of My Tears* and *Baby I Need Your Loving* though he did so considerably after the original versions were released. The Vontastics covered the Beatle tune *Daytripper* a few months after the Liverpoolers were successful with it. Another notable example found Solomon Burke doing his rendition of Credence Clearwater Revival's *Proud Mary*.

Apart from the "cover" concept there are other similarities between pop and R&B lyrics. Perhaps the one most frequently encountered is the predominance of the romantic love theme coupled with the problems created by unrequited love. A listing of the pop song titles that glorify romantic love would require a book in itself. For those unfamiliar with R&B here are just a few of the many recordings that deal with idealistic love: *When We Get Married*—Dreamlovers—Heritage; *Dream Girl*—Jesse Belvin—Hollywood; *A Kiss and A Vow*—Nitecaps—Groove; *When Your Love Comes Along*—Five Satins—

First; *Three Steps From the Altar*—Shep and the Lime-lights—Hull; *My Dream My Love*—Barons—Imperial. Still other titles in which the lyrics deal with heartbreak or spurned love include: *You're Laughing Cause I'm Crying*—Toppers—Jubilee; *Long Lonely Nights*—Lee Andrews and the Hearts—Mainline; *I'm Sorry*—Royal Holidays—Penthouse; *I Who Have Nothing*—Ben E. King—Atco; *Don't Deceive Me*—Chuck Willis—Okeh.

Just as popular music has occasionally honored American heroes (remember *The Ballad of Davy Crockett* and *The Battle of New Orleans?*), the Negro has paid musical tribute to his own. Decca released a record by B. Johnson as early as 1949 entitled *Did You See Jackie Robinson Hit the Ball?* while in the same year Cab Calloway's orchestra made a recording called *Ol' Joe Louis*. Doc Starkes and his Nightriders paid tribute in 1954 to Willie Mays with a tune appropriately entitled *Say Hey*. The Motown people released a 45 rpm single of Dr. Martin Luther King's famous *I Have A Dream* speech following his untimely death. Various singers have been honored in song posthumously. Among these are Johnny Ace, Sam Cooke, Jesse Belvin, and Otis Redding. Some heroes of the white community have entered the recording studio in an effort to capitalize on fame gained in other walks of life. Audie Murphy comes to mind as do sports heroes Bake Turner and Dennis McLain. Similarly, Negro sports figures Rosie Grier (sometimes accompanied by the Los Angeles Rams' "Fearsome Foursome"), Sugar Ray Robinson, and Ernie Terrell have cut records. While we're on this topic I think it especially appropriate to mention the name of Arthur Lee Maye. As lead singer of the Crowns who recorded briefly, but oh so beautifully, for Modern, RPM, Dig, Cash, and Specialty labels, he,

along with his group produced several highly regarded records. He then went into baseball where he dropped his first name and was fairly successful as an outfielder first for the Milwaukee Braves, then for several other major league teams. While with Milwaukee, he cut one or two platters of poor quality. I distinctly recall that the record label read "Lee Maye, of the Milwaukee Braves." It is a shame that his best recording efforts did not occur after he had made a name for himself in baseball.

Since I have shown some of the lyrical similarities between pop and R&B, let's take a look at the other side of the coin. One difference in lyrics is closely related to the role of the Negro in our society. Until recently, blacks have played what would at best be considered minor parts in American films. Negro movie-goers have found it somewhat more difficult to identify with white heroes and heroines. Furthermore, movie scores and plots have been written almost entirely by whites for white audiences. As a result, Negroes have been alienated from participation in the rush to record the many songs that have sprung from the well of the motion picture industry. How ludicrous to even imagine the Temptations singing *Good Ship Lollipop*, or Bo Diddley doing a rendition of *Do Re Mi*. A closely related phenomenon deals with differences in general themes. R&B lyrics are more likely to deal with the difficulties of everyday life, the battle of the sexes, romance, etc., although there is a great deal of overlap in this area. That is to say, pop music lyrics are almost as likely to deal with these themes.

The call-and-response lyrical technique gained entrance to R&B by way of Negro church music. Typically, the lead singer sings a few notes, then waits while the rest

of the group, or in many cases a female chorus, echoes him. This device appears only rarely in non-rhythm and blues recordings (at least until recently). Ray Charles (with his Raelets) immediately comes to mind as perhaps the foremost user of the call-and-response. *What'd I Say* provides an excellent example of its use throughout an entire song. The Isley Brothers' *Shout* effectively utilizes this technique as does the Temptations' *Since I Lost My Baby* and the Radiants' *Feel Kind of Bad*.

Still other differences can be included under the loose heading of vocal elements. Shouts, growls, and interspersed comments like "Lord have mercy" find little place in popular lyrics. Actually these utterances are even more typical of blues than of R&B. Many blues artists have adopted distinctive shouts and employed them as personal trademarks. While I don't believe this could generally be said to hold true for R&B artists, nonetheless, there are those who employ vocal gimmickry. James Brown and Wilson Pickett, among contemporaries, frequently sprinkle their performances liberally with soulful utterances. In the mid and late fifties it was easy to identify several artists through their vocal idiosyncrasies. The inimitable vocal inflection used by lead singer Leroy Griffin of the Nutmegs, the breathy whisper of the Swallows' Junior Denby, and the crying of the Starlites' Jackie were impossible to describe in words. There are other vocal elements that help distinguish pop, R&B, and soul music. The use of falsetto voice, or the closely related idea of using an immature high-pitched male voice as a lead, has seen great popularity. Another vocal element, that of crying, could well have been discussed under the heading of feeling. Unquestionably, talking parts have made a big impact on listening audi-

ences from time to time. These have traditionally featured the bass but occasionally they have been done by the lead voice. Falsetto and crying have been particularly important in terms of differentiation between pop and R&B. I once played *Valarie* by Jackie and the Starlites for the same college psychology class I mentioned earlier. The fact that these students displayed such a big reaction to the violent crying indicated to me that their popular music experiences had never brought them into contact with the crying phenomenon. These same students were entirely at home with falsetto singing. This was undoubtedly due to the universal popularity of the Temptations and the Impressions. Few white pop artists have "falsettoed" their way into the hearts of the record buying public—Lou Christie is a notable exception—but there are signs that whites will eventually climb on the bandwagon.

Talking parts were once common in R&B circles but have lost popularity in recent years. Among the better-known groups that still use it are the Dells. It should be noted that bass Chuck Barksdale, who does the talking part for the group has a deep, mellow voice that is a throwback to the days when talking parts were common. Among pop artists, the talking part has never been of great importance. Elvis Presley tried it once or twice in the latter half of the fifties, then abandoned it. Parenthetically, it might be mentioned that Elvis was notorious as a borrower from black music. Jackie Wilson told me that Elvis imitated some of his mannerisms and a few pop music magazines have pointed out the extent to which Presley's early success was dependent upon black music. It is quite possible that his talking attempts were inspired by his success at popularizing a Negro style a-

mong whites.

At this point, it should be fairly clear that romantic love themes are always in vogue, regardless of the style in which they're sung. In addition, the "cover" has insured identicalness in some instances. It should also be evident, however, that R&B lyrics and lyrical elements drastically differ at times from those of popular music. To some degree, though, differentiation does depend on the era in which a song is conceived. This is certainly the case with "double entendre" lyrics. The American Negro has always held a more realistic view of sex than his white counterpart. Rather than ignore sex in the hope that it would go away, blacks have treated the subject in a more casual manner. This attitude has been reflected in thinly disguised blues lyrics at least since the first recorded blues. I recall that in looking through Psychological Abstracts, I ran across a study in which the chief conclusion was that blues lyrics have dirty meanings. This study was not done after World War II, when there was a sharp increase in the blues recording business, but way back in 1927. "Double entendre" probably spanned the bridge from blues to R&B shortly after the latter sprung forth independently of the older form. Some early examples of such lyrics can be found in a couple of the sides that the Five Royales did on the Apollo label. Wynonie Harris almost made an entire career out of songs with suggestive lyrics. It wasn't until early 1954, when the Royals (soon to change their name to the Midnighters) released *Work With Me Annie*, that the "double entendre" lyric reached a large number of white ears. The record grew in popularity until it hit number one on the R&B chart. It was destined to be the first of several "Annie" records, most of which suggested that Annie

was a girl of easy virtue.

White America was not yet ready for such a frank look at sex. Many of the bigger stations refused to play "Annie" records. Blacks and "hip" whites bought the records, though. And how! *Work With Me Annie*, *Sexy Ways*, and *Annie Had A Baby*, all sold over a million copies. The rock and roll craze of the late fifties found many blacks involved, but, in contrast to the music of the Pioneer Era, R&R was primarily aimed at white record buyers. Lyrics were non-controversial to the point of boredom. It was not until the early sixties that whites were able to cope with the suggestive lyrics of psychedelic and white-oriented hard rock. The same sort of thinly disguised lyrics that were condemned by the virtuous during the fifties were likewise found so distasteful during the early sixties that the term "underground" was coined. This implied that a song with suggestive lyrics could gain some degree of popularity even without the support of much air play. Underground music, however, is coming to the surface. It has won acceptance in many quarters in spite of attempts to throttle it. Thus, at one time pop and R&B differed with respect to the use of "double entendre" but recent years have brought the sexual revolution and with it a more permissive attitude toward the expression of sexuality in art and music.

5. Chords

One reasonably easy way to distinguish blues from R&B involves little more than listening to a representative sample of each. Blues, in keeping with the idea of "feeling blue," is generally dominated by minor chords. In fact, a blue note is one which is deliberately flatted or deliberately played just a little out of tune, serving to

provide a minor chord effect. Any chord can be changed from major to minor by flattening the third and seventh notes. Any note can be made a blue note by not hitting it exactly on the nose or by slurring it. Historically, the blue note is evident at least as far back as "hollers" and maybe as far as the West African war whoop. "Hollers" probably date back before 1800; in time, they served as a vocal means of identification. A Negro could identify himself to other Negroes from a distance by developing his own distinct pattern of "blue" and slurred notes. You may recall the discussion of misconceptions which was the theme of a previous chapter. One of these misconceptions is that rhythm and blues is inferior to "good music." I would like to suggest, at this point, that the occurrence of "blueing" and slurring in blues idioms may have contributed to this notion. Although this was done deliberately it is easy to imagine the impression it would have on a naive white listener, particularly as the white person is likely to equate blues and R&B. The listener is likely to hear a few bars and infer that the "Bluesician" cannot sing and that R&B runs a distant second to "good music."

Examples of blues recordings in which "blueing" and "flattening" occur, are easily found. In fact, it would be much more difficult to find a blues record on which these characteristics cannot be found. These two phenomena occur somewhat less frequently in R&B but often enough that they are by no means rare. Listen to the Five Royales' efforts on Apollo, particularly *Let Me Come Back Home* and *I Want To Thank You*. The vocalists on the following old blues classics illustrate my point by "blueing" and slurring notes throughout: *Little Girl*—Sonny Boy Williamson—RCA

Victor; *That Old Feelin' Is Gone*—T-Bone Walker—Comet; *I Know How You Feel*—Roosevelt Sykes—RCA Victor; *Big Leg Woman*—Johnny Temple—Decca; *The Blues What Am*—Jazz Gillum—RCA Victor; and the excetrified, contemporary *The Thrill Is Gone*—B.B. King—Bluesway. On the other hand, rhythm and blues themes are often sad, as mentioned before, yet major chords usually prevail. For example, *Alone Again*, as done by the Five Crowns on Rainbow, has lyrics which express the extreme dejection of the spurned lover yet major chords dominate the song:

*No daydreams after dark, No flinging last remark
I guess from here on in, Every park is just a park.*

He's Gone, a big hit for the Chantels, had a sad theme but was sprinkled liberally with major chords and even ended triumphantly on one. Still other examples include: *Down On My Knees*—Heartbeats—Roulette; *Your Promise To Be Mine*—Drifters—Atlantic; *You Said You Loved Me*—Orchids—Parrot; and more recently, *I'm The One Love Forgot*—Manhattans—Carnival. My choice of R&B recordings with sad lyrical themes is deliberate because here, if anywhere, would you expect to find minor chords. Among the many happier lyrical themes with dominating majors are: *Don't Have To Shop Around*—Mad Lads—Volt; *Time Was*—Flamingos—End; *Gee*—Crows—Rama; *Under A Blanket Of Blue*—Cardinals—Atlantic; and the light-hearted *You Talk Too Much*, done by Jimmy Jones on Cub. While dominant chord structure can serve as a relevant dimension in distinguishing blues from R&B, it is useless in differentiating among rock and roll, R&B, soul, and pop. All but blues can usually be put into the major chord category. As a mat-

ter of fact, the recordings listed immediately above represent the Rock And Roll and Soul Eras as well as the Pioneer Era.

Tributaries

The dictionary defines a tributary as a stream that feeds a larger stream or lake. In this chapter I would like to analyze six major streams that represent the confluence of contemporary rhythm and blues. Each of these forces has contributed much to the current state of the form. Although some are probably more important than others, it is highly debatable as to which is most important and which the least. I will make no direct attempt to rank these forces in order of importance although I will make some rudimentary comparisons.

White Acceptance Of A Few Black Groups

As I have mentioned previously, it was a rarity to hear records by black artists on white radio stations in the forties and early fifties. Nearly all radio stations were white-owned and oriented. Black music (except jazz) was openly frowned upon almost everywhere. There were a few groups, however, that were permitted to sneak in the back door. These privileged few probably were allowed to make it because they sounded white. The songs they sang were written and arranged by whites for the most part and the success they enjoyed was largely dependent upon the support of white audiences. Ironically, the groups performed in some places where audience blacks were either barred or forced to sit in the back. A member of one such group wrote of his experiences recently, and in doing so included this ironic tale of segregation in the South. It seems that he committed the unpardonable sin of entering a mens room to wash his hands before a show. Two white servicemen came in, insulted him, and told

him to get out. When news of the incident reached the ears of the club proprietor, he apologized to the servicemen for allowing the Negro performer to use the bathroom. That same night the performer observed the two servicemen in the front row applauding more enthusiastically than most. This incident, coupled with many similar ones, was enough to convince the artist that his acceptance was indeed a conditional one.

The Mills Brothers were perhaps the earliest of these accepted groups. They achieved a considerable amount of fame and fortune with their smooth style and captivated white audiences and record buyers for better than three decades. Listen to the Mills Brothers doing *Glowworm*. Shut your eyes as you do so to try to imagine that they are white. Chances are that you'll be able to pull it off without much difficulty, especially if you've never seen them perform in person.

Another great individual star was Billy Williams. While not as famous as the Mills Brothers, his style did attract many admirers. Though little is known about Williams, he was active at least as early as 1934. At that time, he sang lead for a group he called the Southerneers. In the forties and early fifties, the Billy Williams Quartet enjoyed some minor success on MGM and Mercury. During this time MGM was almost exclusively a white pop label and it was extremely unlikely that its producers would have signed any group that sounded very black. On the other hand, Mercury had a rhythm and blues series that was started in 1946 and continued until about 1952 or 1953. To give you an idea of how white the Billy Williams Quartet sounded, their releases were not issued on the rhythm and blues series, but instead on Mercury's popular series.

Probably the most famous group of its kind was the Ink Spots. Originally formed in 1930 as the King, Jack and the Jester (Deek Watson, Charlie Fuqua, and Jerry Daniels, respectively), the group made a few name and personnel changes in the early thirties. Orville "Hoppy" Jones was soon added as a second Jester. By 1932, the group had decided they needed a new and more distinctive name. The story has it that the name Ink Spots resulted from a leaky pen as the quartet sat in the office of their manager arguing about new monikers. Ironically, the group didn't like the name very well; one member suggested that the name even sounded too colored (once again the idea of trying for acceptance from whites). The name stuck, of course, and the Ink Spots began almost at once to attract a large following. They were signed for a big tour of England and other western European nations. While in England, they sang at the coronation of the Prince of Wales. Upon their return to the U.S. on Dec. 26, 1935, they found themselves minor celebrities. Their upsurging popularity was temporarily halted when Jerry Daniels was forced to quit due to ill health. The Spots were under contract to NBC at the time and the network gave Watson some time to find a replacement. A young man from Baltimore came to audition for the job. He couldn't dance or play an instrument and could only sing tenor. In spite of this Watson was impressed. He himself took the position vacated by Daniels to accommodate the newcomer. The new lead voice belonged to Bill Kenny and this unit remained intact until about 1943 when Bernie Mackay replaced army-bound Charlie Fuqua. The arrival of Kenny didn't automatically spell success, though. In fact, for a short time the Ink Spots were making less than a hundred a week. Their Victor

recording contract expired and they signed with Decca where they experienced some success with *Just For A Thrill*, and *Brown Gal*. One day they were concluding a recording session when an amateur songwriter walked in with a new tune. The group needed something to put on the flip side of *Knock Knead Sal on the Mourners Bench* and agreed to experiment with the new song. "Hoppy" Jones did the first talking bass and *If I Didn't Care* was born. This record put the Ink Spots on easy street for the rest of their lives. Following this smash hit, they appeared with Glenn Miller, Red Skelton, Ella Fitzgerald, Pearl Bailey, Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, and Lucky Millinder, among others. They made brief appearances in a couple of movies (dressed like Pullman porters in one of them) and continued making records and doing nightclubs until the group broke up around 1950. In the meantime, Jones died and was replaced by Bill Kenny's brother. This must have occurred about 1944. Research done by Anthony Rotante and Paul Sheatsley indicated that a group known as Deek Watson and the Brown Dots made at least seventeen records for the Manor label from late 1944 or early 1945 until about mid-1949. When the break-up finally came, Bill Kenny retired, Watson put together one Ink Spots group, and Charlie Fuqua another. Little is known of Watson's group except that they made some nightclub appearances during the early fifties. Fuqua's group, on the other hand, made several fine recordings for King. These included *When You Come To The End Of The Day*, *Melody of Love*, *Don't Laugh At Me*, and *Here In My Lonely Room*. Besides Fuqua, who sang bass, the group consisted of lead Jimmy Holmes, Harold Jackson, Isaac Royal, Leon Antoine, and occasionally Essix Scott. True to form, most of these records

appeared on the King pop series, although one of them turned up on the rhythm and blues series. They were released between late 1953 and late 1955 and sounded very much like a more modernized version of the original Ink Spots. In the meantime, Decca continued to reissue old Ink Spots material until at least as late as 1957.

If this was really the end of the Ink Spots story then we could conclude that the group's contribution was a minor one. But the Spots, along with the Mills Brothers and Billy Williams' various groups, were so popular for so long that they had an enormous impact on other black groups. Anytime a unique product captures a substantial portion of the market you can expect some imitations. The Ink Spots were no exception. To begin with they were openly and unashamedly copied by several bogus Ink Spot groups. Pressure on the part of the real Ink Spots resulted in the exposure of a few of these. But a style can't be copyrighted and some other groups with a few more scruples began to imitate them. Though they called themselves the Five Bars (on Bullet label about 1949), The Sentimentalists (on Manor about 1945 or 1946), or The Victorians (on Specialty in 1951 or 1952), they still managed to sound much like the Ink Spots or Mills Brothers. Some other artists that were influenced by them were: The Four Tunes on Manor and Arco; Billy Bunn and his Buddies on RCA Victor; The Charioteers on Columbia's popular series; The Four Knights on Capitol; and the Delta Rhythm Boys on Atlantic and RCA Victor. It may even be legitimate to conclude that any group employing the "talking bass" was influenced by the Ink Spots. This means that their sphere of influence extended to such artists as the Diablos, Heartbeats, many obscure R&B groups, and even Elvis Presley, who

tried it once or twice.

Probably the two most important groups influenced by their style were the Orioles and Ravens. Although neither group really consciously tried to imitate the Ink Spots, both featured lead singers whose deliveries were extremely smooth, polished, and beautiful. It was obvious to even the casual listener that they practiced long and hard and that they harmonized well. This is not to say that the Orioles sounded exactly like the Ravens but that both groups, in their own distinctive styles, sounded a little bit like the Ink Spots. They depended heavily on old traditional ballads for material and their interpretation was easy for white ears to listen to. To me they sounded just a little "darker" than the Ink Spots or Mills Brothers. In any event, the important thing is that the Ravens or Orioles were not generally known to whites yet were wholeheartedly accepted in the black community. They themselves were widely imitated, extending the Ink Spot sphere of influence still further.

Although the Platters began to record for Mercury as late as 1955, I don't think it is too farfetched to say that they also were influenced by the Spots. Although they didn't use the talking bass and had one female voice, their lyrical interpretation was crisp and distinct like the Ink Spots before them. The Platters did not slur their words, in spite of the fact that other black artists were doing so at the time. They recorded for a major label, were widely accepted among whites, were backed by well-polished orchestras, and even did some of the material popularized by their famous predecessors. It is quite conceivable that they even inherited some of the old Ink Spot fans who had no place to turn when their idols dropped out of sight. I have mentioned several

groups, active in the fifties, that sounded like the Ink Spots, yet I have also just stated that when they broke up their fans were left with a gap. This void was not filled until the Platters switched from Federal to Mercury in the mid-fifties. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that in spite of the existence of other Ink Spot-like groups, none of them were generally accepted or even known to the majority of whites. I think that part of the reason for this is that the unknown imitators recorded on small, independent labels that were often identified solely with a rhythm and blues product. The reader may remember from Chapter One some of the difficulties that face small record companies.

Before we move on to a second tributary, there are a couple of minor contributions worth mentioning. Deek Watson wrote the words for *Sentimental Reasons*, a song which was later done by the Rivileers and Cleftones. In addition, all of the early groups popularized songs which others later recorded. Inasmuch as the Ink Spots occasionally danced on stage, they may have helped contribute to the popularity of choreography among today's artists (although today choreography is far better than it was in the time of the Ink Spots).

In conclusion, it is probably fair to say that this tributary is not contributing much to the contemporary rhythm and blues mainstream. It is barely noticeable in the efforts of a few of the pop-oriented soul groups, while it was a much more important factor in the early fifties.

Big Band Blues

Back in the 1930's a few bluesmen decided that the blues ought to be modified somewhat in order to appeal to the growing numbers of more sophisticated Negroes

living in urban areas. I believe that there was definitely a connection between the time that big band blues began to appear and the arrival of Negroes in the urban ghettos. Had there not been sufficient numbers of urban blacks in these ghettos by the 1930's to support such sophistication, then I think that the advent of big band blues would have been delayed until such time as there were sufficient numbers. At any rate, as a result of the emigration to the cities of the North, musicians decided to "improve" the blues. Originally blues numbers were done by one artist who sang a song (usually his own composition) relating some personal difficulty. Such an artist usually accompanied himself on a guitar and frequently could be heard tapping his foot on the floor to keep time. I might add that foot-tapping was generally the only rhythm "instrument" employed. Single artist blues provided easy listening and most blacks could readily identify with the singer's plight. This primitive, unembellished brand of blues soon became known as rural or country blues as contrasted with big band or urban blues. The urban variety came about largely because Negroes wanted something more "danceable." Picture a crowded dance floor on a Saturday night in the ghetto and try to imagine one old man playing a guitar and singing. Doesn't fit does it? It would be very hard to hear him, let alone attempt to dance. Small and not-so-small bands sprang up in places like St. Louis and Kansas City. These bands were heavily oriented toward performance, whereas the country blues people were more concerned with personal expression. The blues bands developed big rhythm sections to make dancing easier. Consequently, the vocalists had to modify their efforts somewhat; they were forced to increase their volume to a semi-shout. In most

respects, however, urban blues was only a short step removed from the older country variety. Besides increased instrumentation and perhaps a slightly polished vocal delivery, there wasn't any major change involved. Boogie-woogie piano began to evolve at the same time among the same people involved in blues and a fusion of the two resulted in the vocal styles of Roy Brown, Wynonie Harris and some others. This generally didn't occur until after World War II. It wasn't difficult for the country bluesmen to make the switch to the urban style. In fact, some well-known urban bluesmen did start out that way. "Big" Bill Broonzy perhaps best exemplifies these artists, many of whom were born in the South and moved to Northern cities when they reached adulthood.

As more and more blacks continued to pour into Northern ghettos, the importance of urban blues relative to country blues increased more or less proportionately. Today, the real down-home, country blues is almost dead. Activity in this area is generally confined to the occasional issue of a "reworked for stereo" album containing a mixture of country and urban blues. Imperial has released one or two noteworthy albums and the small California-based Arhoolie Records has pioneered in the effort to keep this genuine folk art alive.

The semi-shouters began to accumulate fans and admirers among blacks everywhere. Joe Turner, who managed to get his name before the white public in the mid-fifties, was popular in the black community long before that. Jimmy Rushing was another of the early artists to adapt to the semi-shouting change. When the Second World War came the whole record industry suffered a slowdown, but following the war the urban blues became more popular than ever. Cecil Gant, a war veteran who

played boogie-woogie and sang in the semi-shout style helped to revive the sale of blues recordings. "Hot Lips" Page, who recorded for Savoy and King, frequently appeared to be competing with his raucous but talented Hot Seven to see who could produce the greatest volume. There were others—many others. In fact, a host of "bluesicians" who conformed to this general approach cropped up. Among them were: Jimmy Witherspoon, Roy Milton, Wynonie Harris, "Bull Moose" Jackson, Smokey Hogg, Muddy Waters, T-Bone Walker, Jimmy Liggins, and Peppermint Harris. B.B. King has continued this tradition up to the present day and it has finally begun to pay financial dividends. Most of the old shouters gave it up years ago and many of the contemporaries are Johnny-come-lately imitators of King. There are a few shouters active today (Wilson Pickett for one) but they come from a gospel rather than a blues tradition.

Urban and country blues existed side by side for so many years that the term "rhythm and blues" changed its meaning. The term became associated with black artists performing for a primarily black audience regardless of the volume produced by the rhythm section. In fact, the reader may recall from an earlier chapter that the group sounds emanating from the early fifties were backed by small, relatively subdued combos. Joe Turner, Jimmy Witherspoon, B.B. King, and the others who back in the thirties would have been called rhythm and blues singers, are regarded today as blues singers. Both Paul Oliver and LeRoi Jones seemed to have disregarded these facts in the books they wrote about black music in America. They both viewed the rhythm and blues of the fifties as simply a continuation of the rhythm and blues of the thirties. Neither paid any attention to the many

black groups who recorded from 1946 to the present. In the twenty-five years since 1946 the total number of such groups must have totaled at least five hundred. Neither Oliver nor Jones admits that any other forces helped to shape rhythm and blues, although reading other parts of their work left me with the impression that they were aware of at least two or three of the forces cited in this chapter.

The evolution of the vocal group did not take place solely as a logical extension of the white acceptance of a few "bleached" groups like the Ink Spots. In addition to some other contributing forces, one very real factor was the blues tradition. A few of the early groups were very close to a straight blues sound. They employed the twelve bar form along with an extensive use of minor chords. Sad lyrical themes relating personal troubles dominated their musical efforts. In fact, some of the early groups were vocal groups in name only. On many recordings the lead voice dominated while the other two or three vocalists were barely audible "oohing" and "ahhing" in the background. Perhaps all the groups were at least partially touched by the blues tradition but some in particular stand out as groups especially influenced. The Toppers on Imperial, and sometimes the Hawks, also on Imperial, were very bluesy. The Five Royales, who made nine records for Apollo from 1952 to 1954 and later a number of sides for King, also were among the early groups with an extremely bluesy approach. *Cloudy and Raining* by the Five Bluejays was very earthy; most of the early material done by the Robins for Savoy and Aladdin was also close to the roots from which rhythm and blues sprang forth. The Royals, (neither the Rovals who became the Midnighters or the Five Royales)

who backed the late Chuck Willis on a few of his early sides, could barely be heard while Chuck poured out his emotions through some sorrowful blues numbers.

It is extremely difficult to accurately assess the degree of influence the blues tradition has had on the music of the Rock And Roll and Soul Eras. During the Rock Era Elvis Presley was quite important and he borrowed heavily from the blues of the late forties and early fifties. Yet his interpretations of many blues numbers were not very bluesy. Generally, I think it fair to say that soul is musically closer to blues than to rock 'n' roll although chronologically the Soul Era is, of course, closer to the Rock Era. B.B. King, Albert King, Muddy Waters, and a few others are relatively more popular now than ever before. The blues tradition can be at least faintly heard today in the recorded works of James Carr, Otis Redding and numerous artists who aren't as well-known.

The Influence Of Negro Churches

It would be easy for me, in the course of discussing major influences, to underestimate the importance of black churches. Conversely, it would be hard to overestimate their great influence. One of the chief prerequisites for becoming a soul singer, according to one artist, is to be brought up with that old-time religion. Many artists got their first taste of music through Negro churches. Bill Broonzy, the late, great bluesman, deplored Ray Charles' churchy sound, claiming that it was wrong to mix blues with spirituals. He felt that Ray's voice was good enough but that he should leave blues alone and sing only gospel. Charles actually went so far as to take an old spiritual, substitute "baby" for "Jesus" in a few places, and record it. The record did reasonably well too. The list of artists whose vocal be-

ginnings came in the church is indeed a long one. To name just a few: Sam Cooke; Ruth Brown, Dionne Warwick, Clyde McPhatter's Drifters, Billy Bunn and His Buddies; Jerry Butler; Aretha Franklin; The Dells; the Midnighters, and Little Richard.

I asked Archie Bell how he felt about the role of the Negro church as it related to rhythm and blues:

LM: To what extent has Negro church music contributed to rhythm and blues?

AB: I think about 95 per cent. In other words, its the roots. Its basically the same thing. Its all spiritual roots, and a lot of rhythm and blues things they take from church song books.

I asked the same question of Mike McGill, Johnny Carter, and Marvin Junior. Notice the close agreement with Archie Bell's opinion:

MM: Everything I would say—the whole foundation of it. It had to stem from the church.

LM: How about you John? What do you think about that?

JC: I think about ninety per cent of it.

LM: What would the other ten per cent be constituted of?

JC: People who took it up that never went to church. You take ninety per cent of your rhythm and blues singers started in church. Maybe ninety-eight per cent, the other two per cent didn't

LM: Could you name a few examples of some of the famous people who started in church?

JC: Clyde McPhatter, Jackie Wilson...

MJ: Dionne Warwick, Fifth Dimension, Four Tops, Diana Ross and the Supremes...

JC: The Dells, Etta James, Aretha Franklin, Erma Franklin, Temps...just about everybody.

Not long ago I interviewed Sonny Woods, who sang bass for the Midnighters. We talked about many things, but I would especially like to share this:

LM: How did you start singing non-professionally? Did you start in the church as a kid?

SW: Well, I used to sing with the Lofton Choir in Detroit. I was a bass singer. We made one record then, called *Great Day*. Lofton's Choir then had something like 250 members, and Della Reese was a member of the choir at that time.

LM: That's interesting! About how old were you?

SW: I'd say about seventeen or eighteen years of age.

Apparently the transition from gospel to rhythm and blues is not a difficult one. Indeed, several artists were involved in both on the professional level. Johnny Taylor, whose soul hit *Who's Makin' Love* sold well past a million copies, was, in addition to being a member of the Five Echoes in 1955, also a member of a prominent Negro gospel group. Sam Cooke sang professionally with the famous Soul Stirrers before making the switch to a pop-style rhythm and blues singer. The Prisonaires did a few rhythm and blues things for Sam Phillips' Sun Record Company but they also turned out the hymn *Softly and Tenderly*, released on Sun 189. Little Richard has always had trouble deciding whether he wanted to sing rock 'n' roll or gospel. In fact, he was already a well-known artist when he gave it up to sing gospel for Mercury Records and to preach. More recently, the Staples Family, long a respected name in Negro gospel circles, has signed with the Stax organization to sing and produce soul music. Aretha Franklin recorded some gospel before she became a big star. Vee Jay Records of Chicago frequently released gospel records on their rhythm and blues series although they had another series especially for the perpetuation of black gospel music. It would have been extremely difficult, if not downright impossible, to tell the difference between some of Vee Jay's gospel and rhythm and blues records had the lyrics been omitted, or had there been a few word substitutions "a la" Ray Charles.

I think it appropriate at this point to introduce the concept of the semi-spiritual. The term has been used by record collectors for years. A semi-spiritual is a "churchy" record the chief feature of which is lyrical reference to both religious and worldly themes. Most commonly, this takes the form of thanking God for helping the singer win the love of some angelic-like creature. Songs like *God Only Knows*, done by the Capris on Gotham, or *God Made You Mine*, by the Kings also on Gotham, are typical. *Oh Why*, by the Five Blind Boys on Vee Jay, is another good example, as is the Spaniels' *You Gave Me Peace of Mind*. Then there is this phrase, used in several rhythm and blues songs: He picked you out from all the rest, because he knew I'd love you best.

I think that the organ, long a popular instrument in religious services, is enjoying so much popularity in both soul and pop music today as a direct consequence of the Negro church influence. The late Billy Stewart, who cut his eye teeth on church choir music in the Washington, D.C. area where he was raised, was one of the first highly successful contemporary artists to use the organ. Long before Stewart, actually back in 1954, the Harptones and Mastertones, who recorded for the Bruce label, used an organ as a backup instrument.

Many of the vocal utterances thrown in for emphasis by such artists as James Brown and Wilson Pickett are easily traced to the church. For example, there is: *Good God Almighty*, an expression which appeared in the Dynamics' great soul sound *The Ice Cream Song*. Some other common utterances are *Lord Have Mercy*, and *all right children*. Undoubtedly, many of the less obvious sayings also stem from "churchy" surroundings. If you

have ever heard a black preacher in front of his flock you will understand instantly when I say that his sermon is frequently punctuated by the more vocal members of his congregation. Shouts of *Tell it brother!*; *Amen, How long, Lord*; and similar expressions provide a running commentary on the preacher's delivery.

The intense emotion generated by black churches that has become so characteristic of them has doubtless spilled over into the secular life. I think that much of the feeling dimension that I discussed in an earlier chapter is traceable to the outpouring of emotions which occurs so readily in black churches.

The call and response mechanism, also discussed in an earlier chapter, can likewise be followed back to the church. Church choirs often employed this technique.

In summary, I think that black gospel affected music of the Pioneer and Soul Eras more so than that of the Rock And Roll Era. As I have noted elsewhere, the Rock Era marked a trend toward a "whiter" rhythm and blues. When the Soul Era began it ushered in a revival of blackness and concomitantly, a return to the "churchy" sound of yesteryear.

White Idols With Black Roots

Perhaps it could be legitimately argued that there is no such thing as a white rock or pop star who is totally unaffected by black music. I think there are a few white artists who are especially conspicuous on this point, however, and particularly because of the great impact they've had on the masses. I think that these few recording stars are very important as a major force in shaping the popularity, if not the very nature of rhythm and blues. I shall attempt to discuss each artist or artists chronologically

starting with the earliest.

If you expect me to write something at this point about Elvis Presley, your expectations are correct. There has been a mountain of material written about Elvis and it is beyond the scope of this book to analyze his life or his career. However, a few comments are in order. Raised in Tupelo, Mississippi, not far from Memphis, he had ample opportunity to learn and appreciate both country and western music as well as rhythm and blues. As a nineteen year old in 1954, he appeared in several country and western shows in the Memphis area. Sam Phillips, president of Sun Records, inked him to a recording contract while the boy continued to appear locally for about \$18 a performance. He made six records for Sun, sounding a little bit like a black man trying to sing in a country and western style (this style has since become known as "rockabilly"). In fact, several of these sides were composed and recorded originally by blacks, most notably the classic *Good Rockin' Tonight*. Written by Roy Brown, it was a success for Wynonie Harris on King a few years before Elvis did it. It was to be Elvis' second release. His first was *That's All Right*, a tune written by noted bluesman Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup. One of the other titles, *Milk Cow Blues Boogie*, was indicative of the debts Presley owed black performers. The sixth Sun release was *Heartbreak Hotel* and from that point Elvis went on to RCA Victor and fortune and fame. Several people have told me that he studied the styles of rhythm and blues performers and copied some of the things he liked, even as he was still ascending the ladder of popularity. As an established star, he tried a few more songs originally done by blacks and even dabbled a little with the talking bass gimmick that was originated by the Ink Spots.

Nineteen sixty four was the "year of the Beatles," and contrary to the predictions of many, they dominated the popular music scene for several years. Although they appear individually now, collectively they have tremendously influenced the course of modern music. Along with their legion of imitators, they have borrowed heavily from rhythm and blues while retaining a Caucasian sound. Charles Keil referred to them in *Urban Blues* as "the rocking Prince Valiant types from England," and called them "notorious plagiarists." This criticism may be a bit harsh, inasmuch as they have publicly admitted their debt to American rhythm and blues. The Rolling Stones, for example, took their name from an old song by Muddy Waters. Besides, the borrowing hasn't all been one-sided. Lennon and McCartney have produced a couple of songs that soul artists have later recorded, notably *Yesterday*, *Daytripper*, and *Hey Jude*.

The last of the white idols I shall cite is Tom Jones. Sounding at times like a "bleached" Wilson Pickett, his ruddy complexion and dark, curly hair have helped make his name a household word. Whereas Presley and the Beatle types have retained a white sound, Jones often sounds black. Blacks admire his singing, while at the same time they resent the fact that he has made it big by employing a black vocal style. Why not Wilson Pickett or Arthur Conley or Don Covay rather than this Welsh imitation? Marvin Junior told me that "We (Dells) could do the same song in the same way as Tom Jones and his version would be called 'pop' and be placed on the 'top forty' stations while ours would be called rhythm and blues." Part of the reason for Jones' success can be found in the structure of our society. It is simply

easier for white women to fantasize about Jones in a society where blacks are still regarded by many as dirty and inferior.

Musically, the differences among these white singing idols are obvious. There is at least one thing they have in common that is of tremendous importance for rhythm and blues, however. They have focused public attention on rhythm and blues, expanded the market, and made it possible for increasing numbers of black artists to "make it." True, Wilson Pickett may have reason to feel a little bitter, but by reviving an interest in rhythm and blues, Presley, The Beatles, and Jones may have made it a little easier for the average black performer to sell records. How strange that it took these whites to pave the way for the acceptance of black artists. This state of affairs may indeed be a regrettable one but if so, this is not the fault of Presley, Jones, and the Beatles, but of the society that produced them.

Another contribution, specifically related to the Beatles this time had implications that transcend the rhythm and blues form. As Mike McGill put it: "The Beatles made everyone realize just how big a group could be. Used to be when you were with a group you could only go so far."

Excepting a few songs written by the Beatles, I see the contributions of these white idols as being primarily quantitative rather than qualitative. They have contributed little to rhythm and blues though one might argue that they have done much for pop music. Their chief virtue lies in the fact that they have helped open the door a little wider so that a few more rhythm and blues artists could get the recognition they deserved.

The Motown Sound

It might seem strange to my readers that I would mention something so recent, especially when compared with some of the previously mentioned forces that have shaped rhythm and blues for a great number of years. The Motown sound has, after all, been around only since 1964. It was originated by only one record company and has since become known by the name of that company. Other companies have produced some unique sounds which characterized many of their products but none of them are important enough to mention here. None of them have had the impact on the record world that would rival that of the Motown sound. Perhaps only the Memphis sound has come close to equaling it in importance.

Berry Gordy started the Motown Record Company in 1960 with a hope, a prayer, and some borrowed money. For the first few years of its existence, the company got by on the strength of a few hits by Mary Wells, Barrett Strong, and the Miracles. Not all of the horses in Berry's stable were destined to become champions. One young fellow tried to make it big as a singer and failed. Motown released at least seven of his platters; none were successful. The singer's name was Eddie Holland and rather than give up the record business entirely, he teamed with Brian Holland and Lamont Dozier and began to write material for other Motown artists. One of the first numbers they produced was a strangely beautiful thing called *What Goes Up, Must Come Down*. It featured an unknown group called the Four Tops. Fine as this record was, it received little exposure and consequently sold poorly. Such was not to be the case for long. In the spring of 1964, the Hollands and Dozier wrote a tune

called *Where Did Our Love Go*. It was decided that a promising young trio of girls from Detroit would record it. The Supremes recorded it, the Hollands and Dozier produced it, and by midsummer, the Supremes had replaced the Beatles in the top spot on the popular record chart. But the record was important for more than just the fact that it became a smash hit. It turned the Supremes into super stars almost overnight, it established the men that produced it as one of the major songwriting teams, and most important, it began an important trend in rhythm and blues music. The rhythm section was particularly in evidence on this side, not only for its volume but also for the fact that each note was driven home with its steady even pounding. The Motown sound was born!

One of the principle maxims of song writing is to vary little from that which is successful. The team followed this rule to the letter as they churned out one big record after another. Such hits as *Baby Love*, *Come See About Me*, *Stop! In The Name of Love*, *Nothing But Heartaches*, *I Hear A Symphony*, *You Keep Me Hangin On*, and many more were both written and produced by the team for the Supremes. All of them retained the steady, throbbing beat that accentuated each note. At the same time, Holland, Dozier, and Holland continued to turn out hit after hit for the Four Tops. *Baby I Need Your Loving* was followed by *I Can't Help Myself*, *Its the Same Old Song*, *Reach Out I'll Be There*, *Bernadette*, and many others. Eddie Holland also teamed with some of the other Motown writers, notably Norman Whitfield. This pairing resulted in several of the Temptations' finest, including *Its You That I Need*, *All I Need*, and *Ain't Too Proud to Beg*. The "Temps" also cut at least one record

I'm Loosing You, which was not produced by Eddie, yet the throbbing sound was much in evidence. The steady, throbbing beat became a trademark of the Motown Record Company. Many of the company's other artists used it (sometimes with slight variations), including Gladys Knight and the Pips, the Contours, the Fantastic Four, Edwin Starr, Martha and the Vandellas, Junior Walker and the Allstars, David Ruffin, Tammi Terrell, Kim Weston, Jimmy Ruffin, and the Isley Brothers.

Other record companies began to copy the style. The Chess Record Company recorded a girl named Jackie Ross, put a couple of other girls in for support, and produced a good imitation of the Supremes. The same company also came up with a group called the Chessmen; this outfit sounded much like the Temptations. Chess also had the Radiants, who sounded very "Motownish" on at least some of their sides. Although the Dells generally "did their own thing" for Chess's Cadet label, they managed to sound a little like the Detroit groups on a few recordings, notably *Wear It On Our Face*. Still another Chess record that showed the Motown influence was *Searching For My Love* by Bobby Moore and the Rhythm Aces, which appeared on Checker. Not to be easily outdone, Big Wheel released *I Must Love You* by the Falcons and the Topics did *Hey Girl* for the Chadwick label. The Sandpebbles (on Calla) had a moderate hit with *Love Power* while James and Bobby Purify did well for Bell Records with *Let Love Come Between Us*. The Esquires produced *Get On Up* for the Bunky label, a record that was very popular, and two less successful followups called *And Get Away* and *How Could It Be*. These represent just a few of the many tunes with a "motor city" sound. In fact, it may be fair to say that

any "soul" sound with a heavy beat owes at least something to Holland, Dozier, and Holland.

Holland, Dozier, and Holland left Motown in 1969 to form the Invictus label. They persuaded the former lead singer of the Showmen to come along with them and they formed a male quartet called the Chairman of the Board. *Give Me Just A Little More Time* became a big hit in the spring of 1970. The basic formula was the same—a steady driving beat pounded home the song's message. About six years had elapsed since *Where Did Our Love Go*. Holland, Dozier, and Holland had shown that they were still on top and that their well of hits had not yet run dry. As I write this it appears that they and the kind of music they have created will remain a major force in rhythm and blues for years to come.

Sociological Change

There is a German term, *zeitgeist*, which psychologists are fond of using. Roughly, it means "the spirit of the times." I think that *zeitgeist* has largely been responsible for the white acceptance of "soul," just as it was equally responsible for the rejection of rhythm and blues during the Pioneer Era. At this point you may be thinking that I have conjured up a word to define something that doesn't really exist. *Zeitgeist* is not merely a way of describing the collective force of the five factors I have cited earlier in this chapter. I think it is fair to say that several of these factors have contributed to an atmosphere of change. But to account for all such sociological change that way is folly. The Five Crowns, Swallows, Four Buddies, and the Cardinals were relatively unknown to whites in the early fifties, not because they weren't as talented as the Miracles, Aretha Franklin,

and the Four Tops today, but because of the flagrantly prejudicial attitudes of the radio stations, record industry, and the record buying public. Black music except for jazz, was regarded as dirty and unfit for white consumption. Rarely was a rhythm and blues tune permitted to cross the line into white America. Songs like *Gee* by the Crows, a rhythm and blues record that broke pop in 1953, and *Earth Angel* by the Penguins were exceptions (see chapter eight). Lightning almost never struck twice. The Crows hit came on their second release, as was the case with the Penguins. While the Crows never did become as big in the rhythm and blues world, they did have a few good followups that weren't allowed to become hits. Recently, Reverend Jesse Jackson said that Aretha Franklin wouldn't have made it as big in 1955. He was probably right. Today, the Supremes turn out hit after hit using the same basic musical format. The Four Tops change the lyrics, and little else, yet they continue to put out big sellers. Percy Sledge's style gets almost monotonous but his singles consistently climb the charts. What's the answer to this great change in public acceptance? Obviously the attitude of the public has changed considerably. The music industry has awakened to the beat of a different drum, that of an African tomtom pounding out polyrhythmic dance beats. What are some of the reasons that explain the gradual shift in attitudes? What has led to the greater acceptance of rhythm and blues in our time? Of the five forces I have presented I believe that white singing idols have been most important in helping change prevailing attitudes. White-sounding groups like the Ink Spots have also shown many whites just how wrong they could be when it came to prematurely judging black vocal talent. The other

three forces have helped to shape the nature of the music without having any appreciable influence on its acceptance into the mainstream of society. For example, Berry Gordy's Motown beat has greatly changed the sound of rhythm and blues, yet I don't think it made any difference on the extent to which the music was accepted by whites. I think soul music would have become popular among whites with or without Gordy. I rest my case by pointing out the fact that the Memphis sound and soul music that couldn't be classified as either Motown or Memphis has also become popular. On the other hand, the reverse is true for the great white idols. They contributed little to rhythm and blues yet their copied styles eventually made it easier for whites to accept the black artists they imitated. As humans, we tend to seek novel stimulation in a never ending quest to stave off boredom. But we are careful not to seek out stimulation that is too novel, too radically different from what we are accustomed. Perhaps the issue at hand fits this generalization about boredom and behavior. If you can view the white idol imitator as one providing a moderate amount of novel stimulation (after all he is white and does sound somewhat like other singers that most of us are familiar with) and you permit this white idol and his sound to become familiar, then the sound of the rhythm and blues artist himself becomes a little less strange. Having thus paved the way for a large number of rhythm and blues artists the white idol has served an extremely useful function.

Sociological reform has been reflected in the changes lyrics have undergone. Today, we find James Brown instilling racial pride with songs like *I'm Black and I'm Proud* and *Santa Claus Went Straight To The Ghetto*,

while Aretha Franklin sings about getting some "Respect." Protest songs and those intended to encourage racial pride have been around longer than you might think. Actually, about three decades ago noted blues singer Tommy McClennan wrote a tune called *Bottle Up and Go*; the lyrics mentioned that a Negro beat a white man at cards but was scared to pick up his winnings. This protest undoubtedly was met with a few frowns by the people of the record industry. Nevertheless, the song was recorded intact by Tommy. Where then is the great sociological reform I've mentioned? After all, this was rather revolutionary. To think that a Negro could possibly emerge victorious over a white opponent in a game of wits was unthinkable in 1940. The *Bottle Up and Go* story was not over yet, though. It was recorded by several rhythm and blues artists in the early fifties (sometimes under the title *Step It Up and Go*) with slight lyrical changes in the appropriate places. Thus a black-white confrontation was changed to a relationship between a boy and his girl. In addition, McClennan wrote some other songs which by today's standards would be considered only mildly protestful, but they were rejected by the record companies. "Big" Bill Broonzy, one of the most recorded of all bluesmen, wrote a song in 1945 called *Black, Brown, and White*. The theme illustrated the difficulty in getting a job if you were black. Not one record company would touch the song at that time although it was recorded later. Another of Broonzy's unrecorded tunes was entitled *When Will I Get To Be Called A Man?* It called attention to the all-too-common practice of referring to Negro men as "boys." Today songs like this are not only released but occasionally find their way on to the pop charts. *Choice of Colors* and

Oh Lord, Why Lord by the Impressions and Los Pop Tops respectively, are two good examples.

Outside of music several events have improved the attitudes of whites toward their black brothers. The famous Supreme Court ruling of 1954 has had far-reaching effects. It has helped bring blacks and whites together in school, peer group contact being a first step in the eradication of unfavorable ideas about blacks. The entire Civil Rights Movement, a continuing process since well before 1954, has been increased in its intensity in recent years. Intelligent black men have spoken out against the crimes perpetrated against them by society. Although this hasn't brought harmony, and has resulted in misunderstanding on the part of some sincere people of both races, I believe that its overall effect has been beneficial. Whites are now more likely to view blacks as human beings, as real people, with real needs and problems. Through the Civil Rights Movement people of good faith have been made aware of the disparity between democracy in theory and democracy as it has been practiced. Some steps have been taken to reduce this gap, and some encouraging progress has been made. On the other hand, I don't want to paint a distorted picture. There is still too much hatred, too many false rumors, and too much misunderstanding. Hopefully, though, the day will come when the record-buying public can fully identify with a singer on the basis of his talent and originality. Hopefully the day will come when Wilson Pickett will not have to come to you via Tom Jones and you will not have to listen to Big Mama Thornton via Elvis Presley. Hopefully the day will come when television will permit more than just a few of the best known rhythm and blues'ers to parade before the cam-

eras. And maybe, just maybe, there will come a day when the many talented rhythm and blues groups and artists of the early fifties, whose only crime was that they were not permitted free access to the general public, will finally receive the plaudits they have so richly deserved for so long.

Pioneer Era Highlights

In this chapter I will present some of the significant events that affected the course of rhythm and blues music during the Pioneer Era. Inasmuch as some important events have been or will be discussed elsewhere, I will minimize or even omit reference to them here. For the sake of convenience and reader interest the chapter is divided into the years that make up the era. The reader is again reminded that the borderlines for the three eras are not as clearcut as one might think. In fact, because of this overlap some of the occurrences mentioned in this chapter might be of more relevance to the chapter on the Rock And Roll Era. I will point out these exceptions as they occur. The chapters covering the latter two eras will be handled in essentially the same way as this one.

1948

Up until 1948 very little happened on the R&B scene. While blues was enjoying a post-World War II revival very few groups were even in existence. The Ravens, a group that had begun in 1946, were selling a few records, but by and large down-home blues singers like Lightnin' Hopkins, Bill Broonzy, and Joe Turner were attracting a large share of juke box loot. Mercury had started in Chicago by 1947 but it was still a few years away from releasing anything like a classic group sound. On the other hand, the company did have Steve Gibson and the Red Caps at least as early as late 1947. King had issued a few sides, the majority of which were either country

and western, Negro gospel, or shouting blues. Specialty had released its first few numbers, jump blues items by artists like Roy Milton, Jimmy Liggins, and "Jump" Jackson. Modern had already issued quite a few numbers by the time 1948 rolled around; in fact, the company had been founded as early as April 1945. Modern's "bag" was largely blues and piano boogie woogie. Manor, on the other hand, had released several fine sides by groups like the Four Tunes, Brown Dots, Five Kings, and the Cats and the Fiddle.

Probably about December 1947 three men decided to form a new record company. This trio consisted of Herb Abramson, a former artist and executive with National Records, Ahmet Ertegun, and Dr. Vahdi Sabit. The company was called Atlantic Records and its first disc was released in mid-January 1948. The record itself ("Safrantic", backed with "Bass Mood", by Eddie Safranski, No. 851) was not particularly significant but the fact that it marked the beginning of one of the greatest R&B giants of all time was. Of more significance for R&B fans was the release of number 856 in June 1948, a tune by the Harlemaires entitled *If You Mean What You Say*. The Harlemaires thus became the first group to record for the company that was later to produce the likes of the Clovers, Drifters, Cardinals, Falcons, Wilson Pickett, and Aretha Franklin. Incidentally, by reversing his name to come up with the pseudonym Nugetre, Ertegun was credited for composing many of the great tunes done by his groups in the early fifties.

Jerry Blaine formed the Jubilee Record Company in mid-1948, aided by the waxings of the talented Orioles. But the Orioles were by no means the only R&B artists Jubilee ever contracted. The label also recorded the

Balladiers, Enchanters, Marylanders, 5 Sharps, Dominoes, Carter Rays, and Edna McGriff among others during the Pioneer Era. In the mid-fifties even the Ravens were Jubilee artists, but this came at a period when the group was on the decline. Jubilee gradually drifted away from R&B about 1955 but its Josie (originally spelled Joz) subsidiary has continued to put out an almost exclusively R&B product up to the present day.

Still another great record company that started in 1948 was Aladdin. Though it chiefly produced blues records by artists like Amos Milburn, Floyd Dixon, and Charles Brown (both before and after the signing of the Five Keys) the label did have a group called the Four Rockets from as far back as its very beginning. With Eddie and Leo Mesner at the helm, Aladdin soon became one of the most important independent labels on the West Coast, a distinction it held for several years.

A lesser-known label that started in 1948 was Sittin' In With which was owned by the Castle Record Company of New York. The label featured a blend of jazz, blues, and R&B, with groups like the Shadows, Dixieaires and Bluebirds. Late in 1952 it went inactive never again to be revived.

Among the better releases of 1948 were: *Out of a Dream*—Ravens—King 4260, *It's Too Soon to Know*—Orioles—Natural 5000, *I'll Never Belong to Anyone Else*—Four Tunes with Savannah Churchill—Manor 1142, and *I'm All Alone*—Toppers—Savoy 656.

1949

About March RCA Victor introduced the 45 rpm disc amidst much speculation and controversy. The move eventually meant cheaper production, easier handling,

and greater durability, but these implications weren't fully understood, much less realized in 1949. It also affected the entire record industry, of course, rather than just R&B. In fact, R&B probably felt the change somewhat later in the fifties than did popular music because much of it was produced by small, independent companies that couldn't afford to sink large sums of money into new equipment. Nonetheless, I have a 45 rpm R&B records made on RCA in 1949, a few Atlantic and King records from 1951, and a smattering of products from the smaller companies made as early as 1952.

Imperial Records, a west coast company that had already been around for a year or so, released its first record by a young man from New Orleans who called himself Fats Domino. The record (*The Fat Man* on Imperial 5058), like so many others that he made through the years, was a big success. Imperial was still a few years away from producing a true vocal group sound though.

About November 1949, Peacock Records was born in Houston, Texas. One of the interesting things about the company was the fact that its president, Don Robey, was a black man. Today, black-operated businesses aren't quite so unusual, but for 1949! And in the deep South, too! Peacock's first release, number 1500, was by "Gate-mouth" Brown, and it was called *Didn't Reach my Goal*. If Peacock's goal was longevity then it certainly did reach it because the company is still in business with Robey still at the helm. Probably because of its location, the company has always been "heavy" on the down-home material but it did produce a number of fine groups throughout the fifties.

In the meantime, Leonard and Phil Chess, who had

previously owned the Aristocrat label, decided to start a label named after themselves. The Chess label started late in 1949 with number 1425, Gene Ammons doing a rendition of *My Foolish Heart*. It became the center of recording activities for black artists in the whole Chicago area. Like Peacock, however, it was heavily blues-oriented until a few years later.

Some of the better records of 1949 included: *A Kiss and a Rose*—Charioteers—Columbia 38438; *Please Give My Heart A Break*—Balladiers—Arlington 201; *I Challenge Your Kiss*—Four Jacks—Allen 21000; *If I Didn't Love You So*—Robins—Savoy 726, and most of the releases by the Orioles and Ravens.

1950

Late in 1949 the Robins had signed with Savoy Records of Newark, New Jersey. Indeed their first release (mentioned above) was still getting a few spins when 1950 rolled around. Their second single for Savoy, *Double Crossing Blues*, became number one on Billboard's R&B chart on March 4, and their followup recordings also sold well. All of this was important for at least three reasons. First, and perhaps most obvious, was the fact that they became Savoy's initial successful group. Secondly, the fact that some of their recordings were enhanced by Little Esther Phillips started a trend, albeit a short-lived one. Little Esther went on to record with the Dominoes as a sort of female guest vocalist, and Shirley Haven and Cora Williams did the same in 1952 with the Four Jacks. Thirdly, the Robins themselves had a long career. Although personnel changed somewhat, the Robins, or remnants thereof, went on to RCA, Spark, Atco, Knight, and Whippet labels later in the fifties.

In its April 22 edition Billboard began carrying a

column of R&B notes which told fans where their favorite artists were appearing and what they were doing. The column was in part a recognition that R&B was a worthy type of music in its own right, and foretold the growing interest and number of its fans.

The newly-formed Dot Record Company, of Gallatin, Tennessee, released its first R&B record about September 1. It featured an excellent group from Washington, D.C. known as the Cap-Tans. The group was composed of Sherman Buckner, Buddy Slaughter, Harmon Bethea, Lester Fountain, and Floyd Bennett. Lester wrote their first tune, *I'm So Crazy For Love*. Since about 1958 or 1959 Dot has done practically no R&B but through the fifties it put out records by the Counts, Chanteclairs, Dell-Vikings, and Shields, as well as some rocking instrumentals.

On September 7 Modern announced the beginning of a subsidiary label to be known as RPM. The new label produced mainly blues until about 1954 or 1955 when it began to "get into the group thing".

In December Savoy Records came up with another fortunate move, this time by signing a group known as the Four Buddies. Little is known about the group itself (mainly because lead singer Leon Harrison disbanded the group in 1953 and later formed the Barons) but it remains highly regarded today among record collectors.

On December 30 most people were thinking about their plans for the coming year. King got a head start by originating its now famous Federal label on that day. It was more than just a label that was beginning, however. Federal got off to a flying start with a group called the Dominoes. Under the capable direction of Billy Ward, the group continued its success over a number of years,

with most of the group's better records having been released on Federal. Clyde McPhatter was the original lead singer although he quit after two and a half years (see 1953 for more about Clyde). Sometimes when a group loses its lead singer, and especially when he's as talented as McPhatter, the group falls apart. But the Dominoes replaced him with a young fellow from Detroit who had been a Golden Gloves Champion. His name? Jackie Wilson.

Some interesting records from 1950 include: *All I Can Do Is Dream*—Sepianaires—Spinit 0101; *I'm Disillusioned*—Velvetones—Columbia 30224; and *I Almost Lost My Mind*—Ivory Joe Hunter—MGM 10578.

1951

In mid-February the Atlantic Record Company signed a group called the Clovers. Most of the Clovers (Harold Lucas, Harold Winley, John Philip, John Bailey, Mathew McQuarter, and guitarist Bill Harris) grew up around Seventh and T Street in Washington, D.C., where they spent long hours developing the style that made them one of the greatest acts of all time. They became Atlantic's first big group although another great group signed with Atlantic at about the same time. The Cardinals, a group from Baltimore, were not instantly successful, nor for that matter, did they ever become as famous as the Clovers. Still, with such great recordings as *Wheel of Fortune*, *Under A Blanket of Blue*, and *Off Shore* it would be a great injustice not to pay them their due.

About May 26 Columbia announced that its Okeh label would be revived and that its blues and R&B artists would henceforth be recorded solely on Okeh. The label has been fairly active through the years, turning out re-

cords by artists like the Ravens, Royals, Schoolboys, Sheppards, Vibrations, Artistics, and Little Richard.

During May and June of 1951 two rhythm and blues records climbed to lofty positions on the Billboard R&B Chart. Though this sounds strange, keep in mind that at that time blues recordings accounted for nearly all of the records usually found on the chart. The two records were *Just to See You Smile Again* by the Four Buddies and *Sixty Minute Man* by the Dominoes. The success of these two records sparked an interest in rhythm and blues, and probably prompted the appearance of several young vocal groups. The trend did not go unnoticed. In two separate issues dating from the latter half of 1951 Billboard mentioned the marked increase in the number of R&B groups.

Nineteen fifty-one saw the emergence of Apollo's first well-known group, the Larks. Apollo had previously recorded groups like the Four Vagabonds, the Rhythm Kings, the Four Blues, the Rivals, and the Striders but none of them became very well known. Behind the beautiful tenor lead provided by Eugene Mumford, the Larks tightly-knit harmony produced such classics as *My Reverie*, *Hopefully Yours*, and *I Don't Believe in Tomorrow*.

In June, King released its first record by a Baltimore group known as the Swallows. With Herman "Junior" Denby's whispering lead voice showing the way, the Swallows became a legend only a few years after they retired. The Swallows' success prompted King to sign a host of other groups over the years. A partial list of these artists includes the Checkers, Strangers, 5 Royales, Magic-tones, Admirals, 5 Wings, Hurricanes, and Midnighters.

Late in August Lou Simpkins started the United Record Company in Chicago. As was the case with Chess for a few years, United was very blues-conscious. Unlike its "windy city" rival, however, it never did get into R&B too heavily.

In the meantime, still another Washington, D.C. group figured in an important event. Mrs. Lillian Claiborne, who owned the DC label, managed a group known as the Heartbreakers. She had spent many long hours working with their style, writing songs for them and polishing their delivery so that it would appeal to white audiences. About October 12 she "sold" the group to RCA Victor. The fact that the Heartbreakers never became famous is in itself rather puzzling but the importance of this transaction lies in the fact that RCA was clearly indicating its intention to explore the R&B avenue. True, RCA had already released several sides by the Four Tunes, but the Heartbreakers, for all their polish, could still be readily identified as black.

In New York, about November, a fellow named Bobby Robinson entered the record industry with the first of several labels that he owned at one time or another. The label was first dubbed Robin, then after a few releases it became Red Robin. It was R&B almost all the way. By Christmas time it had already released the first of two great records by the Mellomoods (two of the Mellomoods later became members of the famous Solitaires).

On or about December 15 another important company started on the west coast. Black owner "Dootsie" Williams "opened the door" of Dootone Records in Los Angeles. "Dootsie's" first few releases are of secondary importance to R&B fans, but for the sake of those who are interested in first numbers, 301 was the Johnny

Creach Trio doing their rendition of *Danny Boy*.

Some of the more intriguing records released in 1951 were *Today Is Your Birthday*—Sugartones—Onyx 2007, *How Blind Can You Be*—Falcons—Regent 1041, *Tabarin*—4 Flames—Fidelity 3001, *At Last*—Majors—Derby 763, and *My Dear*—4 Dots—Dot 1043.

1952

In Detroit a local group called the Royals filled in one night for the Orioles due to illness. They were so warmly received that Johnny Otis arranged for a recording contract with Federal and even wrote a song for them. The song was called *Every Beat of my Heart* and it has since become a classic. Federal released the Royals' original version of this tune in March, 1952. The Royals became the Midnighters and a couple of years later went on to national recognition (see 1954).

In the meantime, a thirty year-old disc jockey named Alan Freed was beginning to develop the reputation that would carry him to the top of his profession and establish him as the greatest R&B disc jockey of the fifties. While with WJW in Cleveland he scheduled a stage show at the Cleveland Arena. The show, scheduled for March 1952, was canceled when 30,000 people showed up and broke down the doors to an arena that held only 10,000. Freed also began working with a group of youngsters from Louisville, Kentucky called the Moonglows. He not only helped write some of the Moonglows' hits but also wrote songs for the Coronets as well (see 1956).

About April 19 Chess expanded its interests by introducing the Checker label. Checker 750 was *Slow Caboose*

by Sax Mallard and his Orchestra. The new label was a year or two away from acquiring such fine artists as the Moonlighters, Blue Jays, and Flamingoes. Bo Diddley became a big star on Checker in the late fifties, while the Vibrations scored their initial successes with the label in the early sixties.

About the beginning of August the Peacock Record Company expanded by starting the Duke label. Duke had an R&B flavor from its beginning, thanks to Johnny Ace, the Four Dukes, the Sultans, and the Peacocks. A few years later Duke phased out nearly all of its groups, and more recent waxings have been dominated by blues stars of the stature of Bobby Bland, James Davis, and "Little" Junior Parker.

Late in September Atlantic signed some more new artists to its growing roster. The first was a young man from Florida who had worked as an entertainer on the west coast and had already recorded for Swingtime and a couple other independent labels. He was blind and his name was Ray Charles. Ray first began to attract nationwide attention with his waxings for Atlantic; his association with that company lasted about eight years. In a special announcement Atlantic boasted the signing of a great new group and invited the public to enter a contest to choose a name for them. The winning name was "Diamonds", and while they never achieved the fame Atlantic predicted, they did make three beautiful recordings: *A Beggar For Your Kisses*, *Two Loves Have I*, and *Cherry*. Incidentally, this group was in no way related to the Diamonds who recorded *Little Darlin* for Mercury in 1957.

The very next month marked the debut of United's subsidiary, States. The States label featured a variety of blues and gospel artists during its lifetime, but it also turned out a small number of good group sounds by the Strollers, Hornets, Five Chances, and especially the Danderliers.

In December Mercury discontinued its 8000 series, a sequence of about 300 records devoted to blues and R&B. In its place a 70000 series was started; this series has produced 3,000 different releases and is still operative. While far from being an exclusive R&B outlet, Mercury has turned out records by famous artists like the Ravens, Cashmeres, Penguins, Danleers, Platters, Falcons, Dinah Washington, and Jerry Butler since late 1952.

On December 20 another major company made news relevant to the history of rhythm and blues by announcing that it would soon start a new series consisting entirely of R&B. The company, MGM, had issued a few numbers by Ivory Joe Hunter, the Carter Rays, and the Blenders, but had concentrated its efforts on the pop and country-western fields. The series did start about January 1953, and although it ran for only about fifteen releases it produced three great records by the Hideaways and Twilights. More important, it showed the extent of R&B's growing impact on the larger, white-oriented companies. When the 55000 series was finally discontinued MGM periodically released a few R&B items on its pop series.

Billy Bunn and his Buddies' *Thats When Your Heart-aches Begin* on RCA 4657, the Clovers' *I Played the*

Fool on Atlantic 977, the Cardinals' *Wheel of Fortune* on Atlantic 958, and the Cabineers' *Baby Mine* on Prestige 917, were among the more interesting sides released throughout the year.

1953

About February 21 the Rama label started with the release of *I Was Such A Fool* by the Five Budds. This marked the beginning of George Goldner's influence on the R&B world. Goldner managed Rama and most of the major artists who recorded for it. A little later in the year the new label released *Gee*, a record by the Crows which was destined to become one of the first giants; it received exposure on non-R&B stations to the extent that it became widely popular. Even today it is still occasionally played as an "oldie".

A poll taken early in 1953 showed that R&B was being played on the air about two and one half hours a week. This figure contrasted sharply with thirty one hours allotted for popular music and eleven and one half hours for country and western. Certainly these figures point up the fact that the R&B artists of the early fifties never really had a chance to become widely known among whites. Nonetheless, the poll, conducted by *Billboard*, showed a slight increase over R&B airtime for the previous year, indicating that people were becoming more interested in it than ever before.

Peacock's Willie Mae Thornton had recorded a song called *Hound Dog* (later popularized by Elvis) and Rufus Thomas immediately followed it on the Sun label with *Bear Cat*, a tune designed to duplicate the essentials of

Hound Dog. There wasn't anything unusual about this because blues or rhythm and blues had long been considered a kind of folk music and thus not subject to copyright. Peacock took the case to court, and about March 1953 was awarded a settlement. One implication that could be drawn from this decision was that R&B was being accorded legal equality with other forms of music. I have records in my collection that prove that some artists or companies continued to steal music from others but this courtroom decision probably cut down the extent of it considerably.

Early in April the Specialty Record Company announced its purchase of a small firm in Jackson, Mississippi. Specialty's president, Art Rupe, sent Johnny Vincent to Jackson to take over the operation. This strategic move was important for two reasons; it marked the first expansion move for Specialty, and more important, it ultimately led to the founding of an important record Company. Vincent worked two more years for Rupe then decided to go it alone with his own Ace label in August of 1955. The label soon became the home of Huey "Piano" Smith, Bobby Marchan, Joe Tex, Frankie Ford, and several other rock and roll stars of the late fifties.

The Herald label started in April or May. It was not immediately successful, but began to click when Faye Adams' *Shake a Hand* won wide public acceptance. Some of the finest groups that ever recorded worked for Herald, but for some of them at least, this was two or three years away (see 1956).

Late in May Atlantic made news by signing another group. Clyde McPhatter, who had recently left the Dominoes, formed a group called the Drifters from members of the gospel group the Civitones. With Clyde singing lead, Gerhart Thrasher, tenor, Billy Pinkney, bass, and Andrew Thrasher, baritone, the Drifters had hits with *Money Honey*, *Lucille*, *Bip Bam*, *Honey Love* and *White Christmas*. When Clyde went into the Army his shoes were capably filled by David Baughan and later by Johnny Moore and Bobby Hendricks (of *Itchy Twitchy Feeling* fame). The Drifters' later recordings included *Drip Drop*, *I Know*, *Ruby Baby*, and *Soldier of Fortune*. For more on the Drifters see 1959.

On June 2, 1953 an unknown group called the Platters was signed to Federal. They made several outstanding sides which were released over the next couple of years but none of them sold too well. In retrospect, I can only shake my head sadly once again and point to the lack of radio exposure given black performers before Elvis came along.

June 13 found the Flair label releasing its first two R&B sides. The label had previously issued a few country and western tunes. Flair's lineup of artists was soon to include the Flairs (who also recorded as the Rams and Chimes), Laurels, Shirley Gunter and the Queens, Richard Berry and the Dreamers, the Whips, the Five Hearts, and Johnny Ace. In its two years of existence Flair made a noticeable impact on the R&B market.

The month of July was important for at least three reasons. Early in the month a lady disc jockey named

Vivian Carter began a label she called Vee Jay. The new label was successful from the start, due in no small part to the acquisition of the Spaniels, a group from her hometown of Gary, Indiana. The Spaniels got together at Gary's Roosevelt High School when Gerald Gregory, Opal Courtney, and Willis Jackson approached James "Pookie" Hudson and asked if they could sing with him in a talent show. A fifth member, Ernest Warren, joined on the recommendation of the show's director. "Pookie" Hudson and the Hudsonaires stole the show with their rendition of *I Will Wait*. One of Vivian's employees was in the audience that night and she told her boss about the youngsters. Vivian took over the Spaniels and the Spaniels took over a healthy share of the rhythm and blues record market with their recordings of *Goodnight Sweetheart Goodnight*, *You Gave Me Peace Of Mind*, and *Everyone's Laughing*. Vee Jay carried a disproportionate share of the greatest R&B artists of its day, including the Dells, Eldorados, Kool Gents, Five Echoes, Impressions, Magnificents, and Sheppards (see 1966). On the eighteenth of July or thereabouts, Joe Davis started the Jay Dee label, named for his initials. Joe had supervised some sessions for MGM, and had even been responsible for signing the Crickets (no relation to Buddy Holly's group of a few years later). The Crickets came with Joe when he left MGM. In fact their release *When I Met You*—Jay Dee 777 was the first record on the new label. Talk about great groups who never received the recognition due them! Jay Dee went inactive in February 1956 before Elvis opened the door for black entertainers, but in its two-and-a-half year history it featured the

Mellows, Blenders, Sparrows, Goldentones, and Scale-tones. In the closing week of July the Sun label issued one of its first R&B records by a new group called the Prisonaires. Besides the fact that the group was very good, another interesting sidelight was the fact that its members were confined to the Tennessee State Prison. A followup record, released in December, was entitled *A Prisoner's Prayer*, and its mournful strains still live in the hearts of those fans who remember the group.

Late in August a version of the song *Crying in the Chapel* propelled the Orioles on to the popular record charts. This was especially noteworthy since few R&B songs were permitted across the segregated lines in those days.

On September 19 Alan Freed's group the Coronets found their first record issued by Chess. It was called *Nadine*, and the Dells thought so much of it that they issued a version of it in 1970. The record marked a major venture for Phil and Leonard Chess, who had done well with their blues records. Though Chess continued to issue blues material it also turned out a lot of R&B, and soon had artists like the Moonglows, Chuck Berry, and the Rays on its roster.

In November, two more important labels originated on opposite sides of the continent. In New York Monte Bruce started the Bruce label, famous for such recordings by the Harptones as *Sunday Kind of Love*, *Why Should I Love You*, *My Memories of You*, and *I Depended on You*. In the meantime, Hollywood made its debut with Johnny Moore doing the honors. Until about mid-1958, when the label went inactive (it was revived briefly in the

mid-sixties but I believe it folded again) it turned out some good sides by Jesse Belvin, the Feathers, Four Jacks, Arrows, and L'Cap-Tans.

Nineteen fifty-three marked the release of *Baby It's You*—Spaniels—Vee Jay 101, *I Can't Believe*—Hornets—States 127, *If I Can't Have You*—Flamingos—Chance 1133, *You Should Care For Me*—Flairs—Flair 1019, and the first Lamplighters record, *Turn Me Loose*—Federal 12149.

1954

Early in March of 1954 the Baton label started in New York. Baton's chief asset was a group called the Rivileers and the label's first release featured them doing the now-famous *A Thousand Stars*. Baton also had the Hearts, Kings, Ann Cole, Jimmy Ricks, Noble Watts, the Suburbans, and Fidelities at one time or another.

March was also the month in which the first of the "Annie" records was issued. *Work With Me Annie* was sung by the Royals who became the Midnighters about the time of *Annie's* release. The change was made in order to avoid booking confusion with the Five Royales. Actually, the style change became much more important than the name change. A few months before, Federal producer Ralph Bass had suggested that Hank Ballard ought to try the lead part and that the group ought to try some uptempo arrangements. Interestingly enough, when owner Sid Nathan first heard *Annie* he ordered the group out of his studio. They went back to Detroit and actually disbanded for a while. The record was released on a trial basis and when it began to take off, Nathan hurriedly invited them back to his studio. The records that followed—*Sexy Ways*, *Annie Had A Baby*, *Annie's Aunt Fanny*, *Switchie Witchie Titchie*—were alike in

that they were all written in the same key, were musically almost identical, and had lyrics with sexual connotations. The lyrics sparked considerable controversy, with many prominent people attacking "the filthy records", and some discjockeys dramatically breaking their copies. Such publicity probably resulted in a sharp sales increase; in any event, they sold considerably better than the group's previous ballad-type issues. The style was duplicated by other artists with some degree of success. The Lamplighters, a group that featured Thurston Harris (later of *Little Bitty Pretty One* fame), did well with *Roll On*; the Platters sang *Maggie Doesn't Work Here Anymore*, and the Champions scored with *Annie Met Henry*. A group on the Music City label adopted the name Midnighters and issued *Annie Pulled A Humbug*, simultaneously denying its flagrant attempt to capitalize on the name of the more established group. *Annie* records were popular at least until mid-1955, and considerably later if one wishes to consider *Miss Annie*, a late fifties hit for the Plurals.

On April 17 Atlantic started the Cat label with release number 101. Cat 104, a tune by the Chords called *Shboom*, was released in June. The record generated such interest that it made the pop charts. It was soon successfully covered but not before the original had received a great deal of air play. A recent author referred to *Shboom* as the "first rock record", and while such a statement was obviously foolish, it was one of several important R&B records that became popular during 1954.

Marvin and Johnny made their record debut in mid-1954 with a bluesy ballad called *Cherry Pie*. It sold well, both in the original version and in a similar arrangement

by Skip and Flip released in the early sixties. Of more importance was the fact that the Marvin and Johnny duo was the first such male combo to become well known. Marvin (Phillips) wrote most of the material, had his own instrumental combo, and sometimes recorded by himself as Long Tall Marvin. The Marvin and Johnny success served as the impetus for such male duos as Carl and Charles, Robert (Carr) and Johnny (Mitchell), Arthur and Booker, and Sam and Dave.

September saw the release of *Earth Angel* by the Penguins. Dootone's first major hit went on to become one of the biggest R&B records of all time. It carried the unknown Penguins into instant but shortlived stardom. (see 1959).

About September 18 another all-time R&B great was issued by a small record company in Detroit called Fortune. Just as *Earth Angel* was the Penguins' second release, likewise for the Diablos' *The Wind*. Although the latter record didn't meet with the immediate enthusiasm that greeted *Earth Angel*, it has since become an oldie classic. The Diablos made some very good records over the next few years, turning out such largely unrecognized gems as *Hold Me Until Eternity*, *Can't We Talk This Over*, *Mind Over Matter*, and *For Old Times Sake*. The use of falsetto in blues is traceable all the way back to West Africa but lead singer Nolan Strong was one of the first leads to popularize the falsetto style which was later employed by groups like the Turbans, Continentals, Impressions, and Temptations. Other members of the Diablos were Nolan's brother Jimmy, George Scott, Willie Hunter, and guitarist Bob Edwards.

On November 27 *Hearts of Stone* by the Charms reached the number one spot on Billboard's R&B Chart.

Though the R&B versions (the original was by the Jewels on R&B label) were covered by a white artist, nonetheless the record was of great significance. The Charms had recorded some songs previously for Rockin and Deluxe but this marked the first big seller for them. With Otis Williams as lead (not to be confused with the Otis Williams who is a member of the Temptations) the group survived some personnel changes while continuing to make a host of fine sides for Deluxe and King well into the sixties. Among their better cuts are: *Save Me, Save Me*, *That's Your Mistake*, *Ivory Tower*, *You'll Remain Forever*, and *I Knew It All The Time*.

About November or December the legendary Chance label issued its last sides before folding. Its story had originated as recently as December 1950, when Art Sheridan and Steve Chandler founded the label. Between Chance and its Sabre subsidiary the following groups got their start: Moonglows, Flamingos, Five Echoes, Five Chances, and Five Bluenotes. The first two became very famous for their ballads during the Rock And Roll Era, while the latter three never received the recognition they deserved.

An important forerunner of the Rock 'n' Roll Era was the rise of Bill Haley and the Comets. Haley was the first white artist to successfully "cover" black artists with any consistency. His version of Joe Turner's *Shake Rattle and Roll* became one of the biggest pop hits of 1954. His *Rock Around The Clock* also came out in '54 although it didn't become a smash hit until its reissue two years later. Haley's style was part country and western but mostly it was an imitation of the semi-shouting bluesmen like Joe Turner, Roy Brown, and Wynonie Harris. Had he been more physically attractive he might well have

become a bigger star than Elvis Presley. He had two other big hits in *See You Later Alligator* and *Skinny Minnie* before fading into obscurity for a number of years. Recently he appeared on at least one of television's major talk shows doing a medley of his old hits.

Largely due to such records as *Shboom*, *Earth Angel*, and *Hearts of Stone* R&B doubled its share of the record market during 1954. Still, this increase was from only five percent to ten percent.

Some of 1954's more memorable moments were provided by the Five Pearls' *Please Let Me Know* on Aladdin 3265, the Rivileers' *For Sentimental Reasons* on Baton 207, and the Starlings' *My Pleas For Love* on Joz 760. The latter record, released late in April, marked the beginning for Jubilee's new subsidiary.

1955

In January or February 1955 Dootone issued *Heaven and Paradise* by the Meadowlarks. It was the first record for the new group and beyond that it was so successful that today it is regarded as a classic. But of even greater interest is the fact that one of the group's members was white. Thus, the Meadowlarks, as far as I know, were the first integrated R&B group. It wasn't long before there were other integrated groups. Among the better-known ones were the Colts, Del-Vikings, Marcells, Crests, and Timetones (see 1957).

On March 19 RCA reactivated the Groove label that had produced a few R&B items a year earlier. Groove put out some very good sides by the Sycamores, Nitecaps, Avalons, Mickey and Sylvia, the El Venos, and Coronets over the next few years.

March saw the beginning of the Cash label. It never

did well commercially but it managed to hang on for about two years on the strength of performances by Joe Houston, Bobby Relf, the Voices, the Gassers, and Lee Maye. Its companion label Money (what else?) featured the Turks and the Turbans during approximately the same period of time.

Also about March the Flip label sprang up in Hollywood. Flip is especially interesting because its first few records were in the older R&B style, and primarily featured Donald Woods and the Vel-Aires or Bel-Aires as they were sometimes called. A year or so later, when rock 'n' roll had stolen the limelight, Flip changed its approach also. The company signed Richard Berry, the Maharajahs, Dukes, and Arthur Lee Maye. Without question Flip's greatest success occurred with the discovery of an unheralded sextet known as the Six Teens. By effectively alternating boy-girl lead voices, they recorded hits like *A Casual Look*, *Only Jim*, and *Arrow of Love*.

Early in June Mercury decided to get a little deeper into R&B with a new subsidiary called Wing. Mercury had issued a few R&B records through the early fifties but by far the bulk of its production was geared to the taste of the white consumer. Strangely enough, while Wing, in its brief history, did issue some decent sides by the Empires and two of three other groups, the Platters and Penguins continued to record chiefly for Mercury. Perhaps the management of the parent label felt that both groups would be accepted into the pop mainstream. If so, they were right about the Platters. The Penguins made some good sides for Mercury but went back to Dooto after a couple of years.

The Glory label had not been in existence long when

on June 10 it released *Soldier Boy* by the Four Fellows. *Soldier Boy* became a big hit and has since been recognized as an all-time great. It seems such a shame that subsequent releases by the Four Fellows and another Glory group called the Leaders were never given sufficient air play.

On August 20 Atlantic debuted the Atco label. At the same time it announced the signing of a group from Philadelphia known as the Cavaliers. Renamed the Sensations they helped secure a reputation for Atco with hits like *Cry Baby Cry* and *You Made Me Love You*. More important still was the purchase of the Spark Record Company. Spark's owners were Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, two whites who had grown up in racially-mixed neighborhoods and knew R&B as few whites did. They joined Atco as a songwriting team, bringing with them Bobby Nunn and Carl Gardner, two members of the Robins. The remaining two members found new personnel and began to record for Whippet. The Atco group acquired Leon Hughes and Billy Guy and became the Coasters. The combination of Leiber and Stoller and the Coasters proved to be unbeatable. The group became famous for *Down In Mexico*, *Searchin*, *Charlie Brown* and many more.

On October 1, it was another new label; this time it was Premium, a New Jersey-based company. Premium wasn't around long but it produced some good cuts by the Montclairs, Copesetics, and Escorts, and a hit with *My Heart's Desire* by the Wheels.

On October 22 Atlantic's Cat label issued its last two releases, then was quietly discontinued. The decision to close Cat may well have been related to the success of Atco.

An item of possible interest for fans of the Soul Era was King's release of number 4840 on October 29. One side was entitled *Come In This House*, and although it went nowhere, it was the first record by a young fellow named Joe Tex.

Very Truly Yours by the Evergreens on Chart 605 was released late in 1955, as was *The Great Pretender* by the Platters on Mercury 70753. In January *Ko Ko Mo* by Gene and Eunice was released on Combo 64, while a month later the Starlings' *I'm Just A Crying Fool* was released on Dawn 212.

Some of the minor record labels that flourished ever so briefly during the Pioneer Era included: Great Lakes, a Detroit-based firm that put out a few releases in 1954; Gem, a label that showed a few R&B artists on its roster in 1953 and '54; Lloyds, a label that produced only about fifteen different records but featured the Larks on four or five of them; a west coast outfit called Big Town that was primarily a blues label; Treat, a label that featured unknowns like the Five Diamonds and the Inspirators; Theron, a Chicago label that recorded the Sheppards and the Ebony Moods; and Middletone, a label that started in Los Angeles late in 1955 and lasted about a year.

One final note of interest concerns the relative lack of women who recorded during the era. From the late fifties to the present day there have been a number of active female groups, but to the best of my knowledge, the Enchanters were the only female group during the Pioneer Era. Ruth Brown and Lavern Baker were in the semi-shouting blues "bag", while Savannah Churchill was the lead voice on several fine sides done by the Four Tunes as early as 1948. The legendary Dinah Washington

made *Out In The Cold Again* with the Ravens, Ann Nichols sparked the Bluebirds, and Lillian Leach rendered the Mellows a very listenable group. There were a few other women who recorded with male groups from time to time but it wasn't until the Chantels came along that the idea of an all-female rhythm and blues group really took hold.

The Pioneer Era— Some Representative Artists

In this chapter I will take an in-depth look at the careers of a few artists who shaped and, in turn, were shaped by the music of the late forties and early fifties. In previous chapters I have brought out the point that a singer's success is dependent on several factors besides talent. Keeping this thought in mind, I will present information on some talented but not necessarily famous artists. On the other hand, exclusion of an artist or group from this chapter is not to be taken as an implication of "lack of greatness." Frankly, I found it easier to get information about some artists than others. Finally, a discography (abbreviated in some cases) of the recorded "singles" will accompany the story of each of the artists.

Ravens

In 1945 Jimmy Ricks was a waiter in a Harlem bar called the Four Hundred Tavern. Something prompted him to switch to a similar job at the L Bar while at the same time he was influential in getting Warren Suttles to replace him at his previous job. This twosome frequently spent the afternoon singing to the accompaniment of a jukebox. They were influenced by such artists as the Delta Rhythm Boys and the Ink Spots. As they continued to practice, eventually someone suggested that they form a group. They picked up Leo Puzey and Ollie Jones and began practicing in earnest. None of them could read music, though, and so Howard Biggs was called in as an arranger. Apparently Biggs' contribution was

a significant one because the group was soon signed to appear on a club and theater tour and also signed to a contract with Hub Records. Early in the summer of 1946 the Ravens did six cuts which were released quickly and simultaneously by Hub. The idea was to expose the group to the record-buying public with the hope of building a reputation that would attract theater-goers. In September of that year tenor lead Ollie Jones quit. He was replaced by Maithe Marshall. Rather than rave on for paragraphs about the greatness of Maithe, let it suffice to say that if R&B enthusiasts were to vote on the all-time greatest lead singers, he would be among the front-runners. On December 6, 1946 the Ravens appeared at New York's Apollo Theatre where they stole the show from established performers like Stan Kenton and Nat "King" Cole. They were invited back to the Apollo a few weeks later and many times after that. It wasn't long before Hub Records went out of business. The Ravens signed with King Records, for which they did only four sides, although they appeared on four records. This can be accounted for by the fact that three of their records were released with flip sides by the Three Clouds and the other with the flip by the Herman Chittison Trio. All four were resings of earlier material released by Hub. These appeared between August, 1948, and May, 1949, although some of them were reportedly recorded as early as 1947. In fact, National Records had already issued three or four of the group's discs by January, 1948. One of these was *Old Man River* which proved to be highly successful for them. The Ravens enjoyed a fruitful relationship with National until the latter part of 1950 when they teamed up with Columbia. General consensus of opinion is that they reached their greatest heights

during the National years, although many of their later records were also great. Late in 1948 baritone Suttles left the group for a short time. While he was away, Joe Medlin, Buba Ritchie, and Richard Cannon each served a turn as his replacement. Medlin later recorded as a single artist and eventually became an important figure as the promotion manager for Atlantic. Lou Haywood joined the group early in 1949. Billboard reported (March 19, 1949) that the Ravens had just returned from a highly successful tour with Dinah Washington. Perhaps this initial exposure laid the groundwork for the eventual recording of *Out In The Cold Again* on Mercury, featuring Dinah. Warren Suttles left the group again about 1951 to form a group called the Dreamers. That group consisted of Percy Green, Harriet Calander, and Fred Francis in addition to Warren. They signed with Savoy but, oddly enough, never recorded for that company. They had two releases for Mercury and reportedly backed the vocal efforts of some of Mercury's and Columbia's single artists. Leo Puzey also left the Ravens about 1950 or 1951. Suttle was replaced by Lou Frazier while Jimmy Stewart replaced Puzey. The group made five records for Columbia and would have made more except for a major policy decision of the company. In June, 1951, Columbia abandoned its 30000 R&B series and reactivated the Okeh label for R&B records. The Ravens had three platters released on Okeh. The November 24, 1951, issue of Billboard announced the signing of the Ravens to a Mercury contract. After the last Okeh record Maithe Marshall quit, although he can be heard on several Mercury sides. These are repressings of old material from National. Maithe organized and sang lead for the Marshall Brothers, who made a couple of great sounds for Savoy.

He also reportedly sang lead for the Bells who recorded for Rama in 1955. Maithe was replaced by Joe Van Lon, who remained tenor lead thereafter until the group's breakup. Joe sounded a lot like Maithe and undoubtedly this figured in his selection. Lou Haywood and Lou Frazier left and Suttles rejoined after the first record for Mercury. Suttles stuck it out for about a year and then finally quit for good, with Frazier taking his place once again. In late 1954 the Ravens left Mercury and signed with Jubilee records. About this time, Paul Van Lon, who was Joe's brother, joined the group as did Tommy Evans. Evans was on at least the first two Argo releases, while "Boots" Bowers sang on the latter two. Not only did Jimmy Ricks' booming bass voice dominate most of the Ravens' recordings through the years, but it is also fair to assume that he helped keep the group together for such a long time. When "Ricky" quit after the Argo sides to attempt a solo career, the rest of the group drifted off into anonymity. Savoy released a Ravens record in the early part of 1958, but this was yet another master purchased from National.

The Ravens were quite possibly the most important group that ever sang in a rhythm and blues style. While this point is debatable, another point is fairly certain: They were the first important R&B group that originated after World War Two. While the Ink Spots and Mills Brothers were black and undoubtedly influenced the Ravens, the style of the latter was a little closer to the roots of the black experience. As one might suspect, the Ravens themselves were very influential. Several of the songs they did were later recorded by other artists, including *Until the Real Thing Comes Along*, *White Christ-mas* (in fact, the Drifters used a very similar arrangement

when they made their version in the mid-fifties), *Deep Purple*, *Count Every Star*, *Wagon Wheels* and *Out In the Cold Again*. Several groups imitated the Ravens' style. One of the most flagrant examples is *Fifty Million Women* done by the Carols for Savoy early in 1953. This rendition sounded exactly like one of the Ravens' tunes done with Jimmy Ricks taking the lead. The Larks, a great group in its own right, sounded like the Ravens with Maithe Marshall or Joe Van Lon providing a tenor lead. Gene Mumford, who was the Larks' lead, later went with the Dominoes and did the lead on *Deep Purple*.

The following discography does not include albums, flip sides by other artists, extended play singles, or the two or three mediocre cuts released after Ricks left. Dates listed are release dates and in some cases are only approximately accurate.

Ravens Discography

Hub

- 3030 Lullabye—Honey (6-46)
- 3032 Out Of A Dream—My Sugar Is So Refined (6-46)
- 3033 Once And For All—Bye Bye Baby Blues (6-46)

Rendition

- 5001 Marie—Write Me A Letter (47?)

King

- 4234 Bye Bye Baby Blues (8-48)
- 4260 Out Of A Dream (11-48)
- 4272 Honey (1-49)
- 4293 My Sugar Is So Refined (5-49)

National

- 9034 For You Mahzel (10-47)
- 9035 Old Man River—Would You Believe Me (11-47)
- 9039 For You—Searching For Love (12-47)
- 9038 Summertime—Write Me A Letter (12-47)
- 9040 Fool That I Am—Be I Bumblebee Or Not (1-48)

- 9042 There's No You—Together (3-48)
- 9045 Until The Real Thing Comes Along—Send For Me If You Need Me (6-48)
- 9053 September Song—Once In A While (9-48?)
- 9056 It's Too Soon to Know—Be On Your Merry Way (10-48)
- 9059 How Could I Know—I Don't Know Why (11-48)
- 9062 Silent Night—White Christmas (12-48)
- 9064 Always—Rooster (12-48)
- 9065 Deep Purple—Leave My Gal Alone (1-49)
- 9073 The House I Live In—Ricky's Blues (6-49)
- 9085 Careless Love—There's Nothing Like A Woman In Love (8-49)
- 9089 Someday—If You Didn't Mean It (8-49)
- 9098 I'm Afraid Of You—Get Wise Baby (12-49)
- 9101 I've Been A Fool—Don't Have To Ride No More (1-50)
- 9111 Count Every Star—I'm Gonna Paper My Walls (4-50)
- 9131 I'm Gonna Take To The Road—Phantom Stage Coach (11-50)
- 9148 Lilacs In The Rain—Time Marches On (3-51)

Columbia

- 39050 Time Takes Care Of Everything—Don't Look Now (11-50)
- 39070 I'm So Crazy For Love—My Baby's Gone (12-50)
- 39112 You Don't Have To Drop A Heart To Break It—Midnight Blues (1-51)
- 39194 You're Always In My Dreams—Gotta Find My Baby (3-51)
- 39408 You Foolish Thing—Honey I Don't Want You (6-51)

Okeh

- 6825 The Wiffenpoof Song—I Get All My Lovin' On Saturday Night (9-51)
- 6843 Everything But You—That Old Gang Of Mine (12-51)
- 6888 Mam'selle—Calypso (6-52)

Mercury

- 5764 There's No Use Pretending—Wagon Wheels (3-52)
- 5800 Looking For My Baby—Begin the Beguine (6-52)
- 5853 Chloe-e—Why Did You Leave Me (6-52)

- 8257 Out In The Cold Again—Hey Good Lookin' (11-51)
- 8291 Write Me One Sweet Letter—Rock Me All Night Long (11-52)
- 8296 Too Soon—Love Is The Thing (12-52)
- 70060 Don't Mention My Name—I'll Be Back (1-53)
- 70119 Come A Little Closer—She's Got to Go (3-53)
- 70240 Without A Song—Walking My Blues Away (11-53)
- 70213 Who'll Be The Fool—Rough Ridin' (9-53)
- 70307 September Song—Escorting or Courting (1-54)
- 70330 Going Home—Lonesome Road (3-54)
- 70413 Love Is No Dream—I've Got You Under My Skin (7-54)
- 70505 Silent Night—White Christmas (11-54)
- 70554 Old Man River—Write Me A Letter (1-55)

Jubilee

- 5184 Bye Bye Baby Blues—Happy Go Lucky Baby (2-55)
- 5203 Green Eyes—The Bells Of San Raquel (6-55)
- 5217 On Chapel Hill—We'll Raise A Ruckus Tonight (10-55)
- 5237 I'll Always Be In Love With You—Boots & Saddles (3-56)

Argo

- 5255 Kneel and Pray—I Can't Believe (10-56)
- 5261 A Simple Prayer—Water Boy (3-57)
- 5276 Dear One—That'll Be The Day (also on Checker 871) (8-57)

- 5284 Here Is My Heart—Lazy Mule (11-57)

Savoy

- 1540 Silent Night—White Christmas (11-57)

Five Keys

Considering the fact that the Five Keys had such a long and distinguished career, very little is known about them. Though the same could be said of many of the great artists of the Pioneer Era, I think that it is particularly true of this fine group.

Original lead singer Rudy West was born July 25, 1932, while his brother Bernie was born February 4, 1930. Ripley Ingram was born about 1930, while Raphael Ingram was born in 1931. These two sets of brothers formed the nucleus from which the group evolved.

From grade school days the boys had sung in church in their hometown of Newport News, Virginia. During later school days at Huntington High they were known as the Sentimental Four and gained a local reputation by singing gospel at churches in the Newport News-Hampton-Norfolk area. In 1949 the boys decided to abandon the gospel material that they were familiar with and venture into the world of rhythm and blues. Following the example of the Orioles, they decided that a fifth man should be added. As a result, Maryland Pierce, who had been a classmate of Rudy, joined the group. At the same time the name of the group was changed to the Five Keys. The youngsters gained valuable experience on a tour with Miller's Brown Skin Models, an all-black show that played carnivals and fairs all over the country. They returned home to enter several local talent shows; it was about at this point that Raphael went into the Army. He was replaced by Dickie Smith, who not only composed much of the group's material but also sang lead on several numbers. When they won nearly every tidewater area contest that they entered, they became restless for bigger "game" and set out for New York. Before long they found themselves winning top prize over thirty-one other contestants at the renowned Apollo Theatre. This touched off some competition among record companies to sign the young group, a competition which ended in February, 1951, when Eddie Mesner signed them to an Aladdin contract. Oddly enough, Eddie, who along with brother Leo owned the Hollywood-based record company, also signed Jackie "Moms" Mabley on the same trip through the Southeast (Nineteen years and a few months after signing the contract Rudy West's chief recollection of it was that the

group got a very bad deal). The group had already cut demonstration copies of *With A Broken Heart, Too Late, Hucklebuck With Jimmy*, and a few other sides that were never subsequently issued, but Mesner decided to have some of these redone. The Five Keys went to New York almost immediately and once again in late March for recording sessions. From the March session came the classic *Glory Of Love*. On September 22, 1951, it reached the position of No. 1 on Billboard's R&B Chart, and as fate would have it, the record became their only million-seller on Aladdin. In fact, it was the only really successful record during their three-year tie with the company. Most of their recordings for Aladdin were in a similar style and today they are regarded as equal to if not actually better than *Glory Of Love*. Amazed? Again I feel compelled to state that all this took place at a time when rhythm and blues was widely held to be inferior to the popular music of the white "mainstream." Perhaps we should marvel at the fact that one of their recordings did make it big.

In 1953 Rudy West began serving a two-year hitch in the Army, while Ulysses Hicks took his place. Hicks reportedly died about the time that Rudy rejoined the group. Little is known about him, but Rudy says he sang lead on *Oh! Babe!* In the meantime another important change had taken place. Dick Smith decided to go it alone and in the latter part of January, 1954, he signed a contract to record for the newly-formed Bruce label. I have never seen any of the records he supposedly made and it is certain that he rapidly faded into obscurity. Replacement Ramon Loper "stuck" until the group folded years later.

The fact that Aladdin was a small, independent company may also have contributed to the lack of success of some of the group's records. In any event when their contract expired, manager Sol Richfield contacted Capitol Records and was able to secure a new contract for the group about August, 1954. With Maryland Pierce doing the lead, *Ling Ting Tong* became their second million seller. With Rudy doing the echoing effect and Maryland the lead vocal, *Close Your Eyes* was also a hit. The Five Keys had two million sellers in 1956 with *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind*, and *Wisdom Of A Fool*. Many artists have since paid tribute to the group by singing and recording these great numbers, but only the Admirals' version of *Close Your Eyes* can approach the quality of the original recordings.

While some collectors have shunned the Capitol recordings in favor of those on Aladdin, I see no sharp distinction between the group's output on the two labels. Certainly the last few Capitol records are not on the same level as the earlier ones but I think this represents a gradual adjustment to the times. The real difference lies in the more polished orchestration provided by Dave Cavanaugh's outfit, coupled with the overall better quality production that Capitol could more readily afford.

In the meantime, Capitol's chief competitors were at a loss to counteract the sales of Five Keys records. Like Capitol they weren't too familiar with rhythm and blues and weren't sure what to do. RCA's Groove label came up with several talented groups intended to capitalize (no pun intended) on the sound of the Five Keys, although none of them were able to sell records consistently. The Nitecaps, Coronets, and the Dappers were among

these, but perhaps the most interesting of all was the Avalons. Here was another group from Newport News that featured none other than Raphael Ingram, who by that time had finished his military obligation. A clue to the lukewarm reception of this group that sounded so much like the Keys may have been provided by the fact that they operated out of Canada. North of the border they were greatly admired in clubs where they played, but they weren't establishing a reputation in the States, where the largest portion of the record market was located.

In 1958, while on tour in Bridgeport, Connecticut, Rudy West suddenly announced his retirement. He had had enough of the kind of life that entertainers lead. In spite of efforts to get him back he remained in semi-retirement. By this time all of the Capitol sides had been cut, so when Dick Threatt replaced Rudy, the Five Keys' Capitol contract was about to expire. When it did, the group signed with King Records, probably about mid-1959. King was equally unsuccessful at persuading Rudy to rejoin the Keys but he did do three records for them as a soloist. None of them sold well. Among the better sides that the group produced for King included *I Took Your Love For A Toy*, *You Broke The Only Heart*, and *How Can I Forget You*. Interestingly enough these sounded more like their ballads of 1955 than the kind of sound that was being produced in the early sixties. It was probably the inability to adapt their material to the changing times that spelled the end for this great group.

In the meantime, other personnel changes occurred. Bernie West and Ripley Ingram left sometime during the early sixties and so did Dick Threatt. Gene Moore sang

lead on slow numbers after Threatt left, and by 1964 Raymond Haskiss and Daytill Jones were in the group. The Five Keys probably split up in 1964 or 1965. Rudy West re-sang *Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind* for SegWay with a group called the Five Keys but it probably wasn't the same group. This was most likely done about 1962, but regardless, it isn't even a fair substitute for the 1956 version.

In 1970 Bernie West was working in the shipyard somewhere in the Virginia tidewater area. Rudy West was a U.S. Post Office worker living in Hampton, Virginia. He had a small combo and was singing part-time in a local club. Ramon Loper was a shoe salesman in New York. Maryland Pierce lived somewhere in Ohio.

Capitol issued a couple of extended play 45's which include some nice songs that were never released on regular 45's. In addition, albums by Aladdin, Score (an Aladdin subsidiary), Capitol, and King contain most of the group's better efforts. Unfortunately, even these are generally hard to find and thus have not been included in the album section of this book. In recent months three previously unreleased "singles" have been issued bearing the defunct Aladdin label.

Five Keys Discography

Aladdin

- 3085 With A Broken Heart—Too Late (4-51)
- 3099 The Glory Of Love—Hucklebuck With Jimmy (7-51)
- 3113 It's Christmas Time—Old MacDonald (Had A Farm) (12-51)
- 3118 Yes Sir, That's My Baby—Old MacDonald (Had A Farm) (1-52)
- 3119 Darling—Goin' Downtown (2-52)
- 3127 Red Sails In The Sunset—Be Anything But Be Mine (3-52)

- 3131 Mistakes—How Long (5-52)
- 3136 I Hadn't Anyone Til You—Hold Me (7-52)
- 3158 I Cried For You—Serve Another Round (11-52)
- 3167 Can't Keep From Crying—Come Go My Bail, Louise (1-53)
- 3175 There Ought To Be A Law—Mama (Your Daughter Told A Lie On Me) (3-53)
- 3182 I'll Always Be In Love With You—Rocking & Crying Blues (4-53)
- 3190 These Foolish Things—Lonesome Old Story (5-53)
- 3204 Teardrops In Your Eyes—I'm So High (9-53)
- 3214 My Saddest Hour—Oh! Babe! (12-53)
- 3228 Someday Sweetheart—Love My Loving (3-54)
- 3245 Deep In My Heart—How Do You Expect Me To Get It (6-54)
- 3263 My Love—Why, Oh Why (11-54)
- 3312 Story Of Love—Serve Another Round (3-56)
- Capitol**
- 2945 Ling Ting Tong—I'm Alone (9-54)
- 3032 Close Your Eyes—Doggone It, You Did it (1-55)
- 3127 The Verdict—Me Make Um Pow Wow (5-55)
- 3185 I Wish I'd Never Learned To Read—Don't You Know I Love You (7-55)
- 3267 Gee Whittakers!—'Cause You're My Lover (11-55)
- 3318 What Goes On—You Broke The Rules Of Love (1-56)
- 3392 She's The Most—I Dreamt I Dwelt In Heaven (4-56)
- 3455 Peace and Love—My Pigeon's Gone (6-56)
- 3502 Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind—That's Right (7-56)
- 3597 Wisdom Of A Fool—Now Don't That Prove I Love You (12-56)
- 3660 Let There Be You—Tiger Lily (3-57)
- 3710 Four Walls—It's A Groove (5-57)
- 3738 This I Promise—The Blues Don't Care (6-57)
- 3786 The Face Of An Angel—Boom-Boom (8-57)
- 3830 Do Anything—It's A Crying Shame (10-57)
- 3861 From Me To You—Whippety Whirl (12-57)
- 3948 With All My Love—You're For Me (3-58)
- 4009 Emily Please—Handy Andy (7-58)
- 4092 One Great Love—Really-o Truly-o (11-58)
- 4828 From The Bottom Of My Heart—Out Of Sight, Out Of Mind (9-62)

King

- 5251 I Took Your Love For A Toy—Ziggus (8-59)
- 5273 Dream On—Dancing Senorita (10-59)
- 5302 How Can I Forget You—I Burned Your Letter (1-60)
- 5330 Gonna Be Too Late—Rosetta (3-60)
- 5358 I Didn't Know—No Says My Heart (6-60)
- 5398 Valley Of Love—Bimbo (9-60)
- 5446 You Broke The Only Heart—That's What You're Doing To Me (1-61)
- 5496 Stop Your Crying—Do Something For Me (5-61)
- 5877 I Can't Escape From You—I'll Never Stop Loving You (6-64)

Inferno

- 4500 No Matter—Hey Girl (65?)

Orioles

Sonny Tilghman was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He joined the army as a youth and upon his discharge returned home where he entered an amateur show as a soloist. Although he won first prize, Sonny decided that his talents would be enhanced with the addition of some background vocalization. He organized a group consisting of some friends: George Nelson, baritone; Alexander Sharp, tenor; Johnny Reed, bass; and Tommy Gaither, guitarist. Sonny Til (he dropped the remainder of his last name) sang the lead part. The group began singing locally as the Vibranairs, and were heard by Deborah Chessler, who became their manager. She was instrumental in getting them some TV exposure on the Arthur Godfrey Talent Scouts Show. Although they did not win, the group impressed Godfrey so much that he put them on his morning show. Deborah, in the meantime, wrote a tune called *It's Too Soon To Know*, and the group rehearsed it. The Vibranairs changed their name to the Orioles and Deborah brought them to New York in 1948 to begin their recording career on a newly

formed label. The label, Natural, was owned by Jerry Blaine, who was a former band leader. *It's Too Soon To Know* was released on Natural about July, 1948. Shortly thereafter Blaine decided to rename his label Jubilee and released the song again on that label. It became a big hit on the R&B chart, selling over 30,000 copies in the first week after its release. On November 19, 1948, Billboard proclaimed it the "most played race record." At about the same time the Orioles' second release hit the record shops. It was also written by Deborah Chessler, but didn't do as well as *It's Too Soon To Know*. Nonetheless, the January 22, 1949, Billboard reported that the Orioles beat out the Ravens as top race vocal group for 1948. A testimony to the importance of these two great pioneer groups can be found in the fact that no other group even received any votes. Indeed there were few groups in existence at that time. One group, the Balladiers, came out with a version of *Please Give My Heart A Break* on March 19, 1949, about a month after the Orioles had released it. They sounded much like the Orioles and it was likely that this was intentional. Although the Ravens and Orioles shared some things in common, one of the areas in which they differed was the use of the bass singer as lead. The Orioles rarely tried this approach although Jimmy Ricks did this time and again for the Ravens. Something of a bass-lead style was evident, however, on the Orioles' fourth record, entitled *Deacon Jones*. Most of the Orioles recordings were excellent ballads with Sonny Til's voice leading the way and Alexander Sharp's coarse but haunting vocal efforts spelling Sonny on the bridge. They adhered closely to this format over a number of years. In the meantime the group toured the theater and nightclub circuits with a

considerable share of success. On one such tour, the Orioles played the Paradise Hotel in Detroit. Sonny met a young man named Sonny Woods who asked for a job with the group. Woods was given a job as valet and held this position for a while before he returned to Detroit to become the guiding force of the Royals-Midnighters. Another tour turned out tragically for the group. Late in 1950 they were driving to a town where they were scheduled to appear when their car wrecked and Tommy Gaither was killed. Supposedly there was some connection between this event and the fact that the Orioles next record was called *I Miss You So*. Ralph Williams was hired to replace Gaither as the new guitarist and the group gave up driving. Another personnel change occurred in 1952 when Charlie Harris was added as a vocalist.

In the meantime, Sonny Til cut a few records on his own and also a few with Edna McGriff. These were also on the Jubilee label and appeared at the same time that the Orioles were recording.

The group continued to play nightclubs and theaters. The May 3, 1952, *Billboard* mentioned their opening night at the Week's Cafe in Atlantic City, slated for June 22. A month and a half later *Billboard* reported that Paul Williams, Lynn Hope, and the Orioles had recently drawn 8,000 fans to Carr's Beach, Maryland. Apparently this was a very big crowd for Carr's Beach, or at least that was the impression I received from the article.

In the summer of 1953 the Orioles released their version of *Crying In the Chapel*. It was destined to become a big hit on the R&B chart, and eventually became more closely associated with the group than any other tune

they recorded. Alan Freed paid tribute to the Orioles by including it in his album of treasured hits by various R&R and R&B artists (see appendix).

The Orioles finally parted ways with Jubilee in 1955 after making a total of 48 records (not counting Sonny's solo excursions.) Shortly thereafter the original group split up. The breakup came at least partially as a result of the fact that the Orioles suddenly found themselves in a buyers market. That is, nightclub managers became increasingly unwilling to meet the group's price when inexperienced, Johnny-come-lately groups began to appear in quantity.

Sonny Til picked up three other vocalists and Sonny Til's Orioles, as the new group was billed, made three records for Vee Jay. Bill Pinckney, of the Drifters (Clyde McPhatter's group), told me that the three new members were originally with the Diamonds, who recorded on Atlantic in 1952-1953. In any event the three Vee Jay recordings are regarded as mediocre when compared with the beauty of the Jubilee sides.

Still another Orioles group headed by Sonny made some recordings for the Charlie Parker label. These were primarily modernized resings of old Jubilee material and many were quite good. I've omitted them from the discography.

As recently as 1969, Sonny Til made a couple of songs on his own for RCA. Although neither record was financially successful, *After* contained flashes of the greatness that characterized Sonny's efforts of yesteryear. Since then he has had an album on the market and has reorganized the Orioles once more.

During the Pioneer Era the Orioles were highly regarded. Their pioneering efforts in bringing a group R&B

sound into prominence were second perhaps only to the Ravens. Today the Orioles are viewed by most serious enthusiasts as one of the greatest groups of all time.

Orioles Discography

Natural

5000 It's Too Soon To Know—Barbara Lee (7-48)

Jubilee

5000 It's Too Soon To Know—Barbara Lee (8-48)

5001 Dare To Dream—To Be To You (11-48)

5002 Please Give My Heart A Break—It Seems So Long Ago (2-49)

5005 Tell Me So—Deacon Jones (4-49)

5008 I Challenge Your Kiss—Donkey Serenade (7-49)

5009 A Kiss And A Rose—It's A Cold Summer (8-49)

5016 So Much—Forgive And Forget (10-49)

5017 Lonely Christmas—What Are You Doing New Year's Eve (11-49)

5018 Would You Still Be The One In My Heart—Is My Heart Wasting Time (2-50)

5025 At Night—Every Dog-gone Time (4-50)

5026 Moonlight—I Wonder When (6-50—

5028 You're Gone—Everything They Said Came True (8-50)

5031 I'd Rather Have You Under The Moon—We're Supposed To Be Through (9-50)

5037 I Need You So—Goodnight Irene (10-50)

5040 I Cross My Fingers—Can't Seem to Laugh Anymore (11-50)

5045 Oh Holy Night—The Lord's Prayer (12-50)

5051 I Miss You So—You Are My First Love (3-51)

5055 Pal Of Mine—Happy Go Lucky Blues (6-51)

5057 Would I Love You—When You're A Long Way From Home (8-51)

5061 I'm Just A Fool In Love—Hold Me, Squeeze Me (9-51)

5065 Dont Tell Her What's Happened To Me—Baby Please Don't Go (10-51)

5071 When You're Not Around—How Blind Can You Be (12-51)

5074 Trust In Me—Shrimp Boats (2-52)

5076 You Never Cared For Me—Proud Of You (3-52)

5082 It's Over Because We're Through—Waiting (6-52)

5084 Barfly—Getting Tired, Tired, Tired (7-52)

5092 Don't Cry Baby—See See Rider (9-52)

5102 You Belong To Me—I Don't Want To Take A Chance (11-52)

5107 I Miss You So—Till Then (1-53)

5108 Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me—Teardrops On My Pillow (2-53)

5115 Bad Little Girl—Dem Days (Are Gone Forever) (4-53)

5120 I Cover the Waterfront—One More Time (6-53)

5122 Crying In The Chapel—Don't You Think I Ought To Know (7-53)

5127 In The Mission Of St. Augustine—Write And Tell Me Why (10-53)

5134 There's No One But You—Robe Of Calvary (2-54)

5137 Secret Love—Don't Go To Strangers (3-54)

5143 Maybe You'll Be There—Drowning Every Hope I Ever Had (6-54)

5154 In The Chapel In The Moonlight—Thank The Lord, Thank The Lord (7-54)

5161 If You Believe—Longing (10-54)

5172 Runaround—Count Your Blessings (12-54)

5177 I Love You Mostly—Fair Exchange (1-55)

5189 I Need You Baby—That's When The Good Lord Will Smile (3-55)

5221 Please Sing My Blues Tonight—Moody Over You (10-55)

5231 Angel—Don't Go To Strangers (1-56)

5363 Tell Me So—At Night (60?)

5384 First Of Summer—Come On Home (61?)

6001 Crying In The Chapel—Forgive And Forget (resung) (61?)

Vee Jay

196 Happy Til The Letter—I Just Got Lucky (5-56)

228 For All We Know—Never Leave Me Baby (11-56)

244 Sugar Girl—Didn't I Say (also on Abner 1016) (4-57)

Johnny Ace

The story of Johnny Ace began June 9, 1929, in Memphis, Tennessee. On that date a son was born to Mr. and Mrs. John Marshall Alexander; he was given his father's name. As a youngster he attended La Rose Grammer School and later Booker T. Washington High School. He joined the Navy near the end of World War II, served his time, and was honorably discharged. Returning to Memphis he decided to give it a whirl as a singer. He sang locally for a while but nothing much happened. A local dee jay on WDIA named James Mattis provided some guidance and eventually he won the chance to record. Mattis contacted Don Robey, president of Peacock Records, who was impressed by Johnny's unique style and decided to give him a chance. Robey and Peacock's national sales manager, Irving Marcus, announced the birth of a new label in July, 1952. The label was to run concurrently with Peacock and they decided to name it Duke. The first Duke release was not long in coming and it was followed almost immediately by Johnny Ace's first record *My Song*. This recording was extremely successful on the rhythm and blues market. In fact as early as August 23 Billboard announced that *My Song* had prompted three "covers" by black artists. On September 27 it made it to the top of the heap. The record enjoyed a long stay in the number one spot, long enough to be regarded by many as the biggest R&B hit of 1952. It was still on the chart early in 1953. Cashbox referred to Ace as a "new artist with a great style and a great big future." Certainly this seemed a reasonable prediction in view of his start. And in fact his very next record was widely acclaimed even before its release. A January 3, 1953 Billboard ad mentioned that 54,000

copies of *Cross My Heart* had been ordered by distributors. A few weeks later it was released amid much ballyhooing on the part of Duke-Peacock and flattering reviews in the trade magazines. It too was very successful. In the meantime Johnny pieced together his own orchestra and began doing a string of one-nighters set up for him by his agent, Evelyn Johnson, of the Buffalo Booking Agency. On tour he generally appeared with Willie Mae Thornton of "Hounddog" fame. He was equally impressive on stage with his own band, although it should be added that the Johnny Otis Orchestra backed his efforts on record. The vibes that characterized Otis' group were never more superbly in evidence than on the sides done for Johnny Ace. Vibes seemed to offset his deep, compelling voice in a way that few other instruments could have done.

Johnny continued to turn out hit after hit in the same great ballad style of *My Song* and *Cross My Heart*. His third record, *The Clock*, became number one on Billboard's R&B sales chart on July 18, 1953, after only one month's exposure. In September of that same year Flair released *Midnight Hour's Journey* by Johnny Ace, with *Trouble And Me* by Earl Forrest on the flip. In view of the fact that Ace was so "hot" at that time it seems unlikely that Duke would have permitted him to record directly for another company. Since Forrest was also Duke property these cuts were probably rejected Duke tracks that were purchased by Flair. In any event, Johnny's lone Flair recording was unsuccessful.

In the meantime Johnny continued touring. Billboard noted that he and Duke-Peacock stablemate "Big Mama" Thornton were beginning their first eastern tour in October of 1953. They were to start at the Apollo in

New York and do a series of appearances in various other eastern night spots.

Johnny's success spilled over into 1954. The first issue of *Billboard* for that year noted that Ace was already on the R&B chart for the second week with *Saving My Love For You*, a tune released in December of 1953. Nineteen fifty-four was to be a very big year for Johnny. He received many awards and honors for his performances and recordings of that year, with one of the most important being "Most Programmed R&B Artist of 1954." He had succeeded in "stealing the thunder" away from some of the finest groups ever, at a time when the Clovers, Dominoes, Penguins, Crickets, Charms, *et al.* were near the peak of their considerable abilities. *You've Been Gone So Long* and *Never Let Me Go*, his two 1954 releases were both big hits.

But the year was one of tragedy also. On December 25 Johnny Ace took his own life in a losing gamble with the game of "Russian Roulette," thus ending a brilliant career at its very zenith. He was attending a party backstage of the City Auditorium in Houston where he had recently appeared. Details of the tragedy are still rather fuzzy and to this day unconfirmed rumors and wild speculations still exist. *Billboard* contributed to the confusion by carrying at least two vague and conflicting stories. Had he been a white, pop singer it is possible that the story would have received more attention.

Just as many great artists are not fully appreciated until they are gone, so was Johnny Ace. His funeral was held in Memphis and was reputed to be one of that city's largest. Many of the top stars of that era were in attendance.

Duke released *Pledging My Love* in January, 1955, and it was received warmly both by music critics and a sympathetic public. It became his greatest hit and it even outsold Pat Boone's cover version, in spite of the fact that Boone reached the height of his popularity in 1955. Duke had enough material left to put out three more Johnny Ace records. Although these didn't do well, the extent of his continuing influence can be more accurately assessed by looking at the latter part of the following discography.

One further note of interest has probably not escaped the attention of soul music fans. The Johnny Ace story closely parallels that of Otis Redding, a fellow southerner whose career was likewise cut short at its peak. Both were eulogized in song and both had their biggest hit single immediately following their deaths.

The discography contains some songs recorded after Johnny's death that eulogized him.

Johnny Ace Discography

Flair

1015 Midnight Hour's Journey (9-53)

Duke

102 My Song—Follow The Rules (8-52)

107 Cross My Heart—Angel (11-52)

112 The Clock—Ace's Wild (6-53)

118 Saving My Love For You—Yes Baby (12-53)

128 You've Been Gone So Long—Please Forgive Me (5-54)

132 Never Let Me Go—Burley Cutie (9-54)

136 Pledging My Love—Anymore (1-55)

144 Anymore—How Can You Be So Mean (7-55)

148 So Lonely—I'm Crazy Baby (12-55)

154 Still Love You So—Don't You Know (7-56)

Savoy

1153 by Varetta Dillard—Johnny Has Gone (2-55)

Peacock

1649 by Marie Adams—In Memory, A Tribute To Johnny Ace (4-55)

Music City

780 by Rovers—Salute To Johnny Ace (2-55)

Hollywood

1031 by Frank Ervin—Why Johnny—Johnny Ace's Last Letter (2-55)

King

4778 by Five Wings—Johnny's Still Singing—Johnny Has Gone (2-55)

Aladdin

3278 by Johnny Fuller—Johnny Ace's Last Letter (also on Rhythm label) (2-55)

Joz

774 by Patti Jerome—Johnny Has Gone (2-55)

In addition the following have at one time or another imitated his style, or copied parts of his name, or both: Johnny Fuller, Junior Ryder, Buddy Ace, Johnny Acey, Johnny Ace Junior, Earl Forrest, Willie King, Bobby Bland, The Aladdins, and Sam Hawkins.



Billy Ward and his Dominoes



The Checkers

The Four Buddies



The Heartbreakers



Five Swallows



Five Satins



Ruby Whitaker & The Chestnuts

The
NUTMEGS



The Pearls



The Velours



The Chanters



The Cardinals



The Paragons

Rock 'N Roll Era Highlights

Rock 'n roll! Joy of the teenager who grew up in the late fifties and early sixties; curse to unhip parents, cannon fodder for vote-hungry politicians, controversial topic for disc jockeys. Rock and roll was, and still is, all things to all people. While it differed slightly from the brand of rhythm and blues prevalent during the Pioneer Era, perhaps its most important characteristic was its universality. No longer a black-only music, it underwent a continual shaping and reshaping by both black and white artists throughout its heyday.

Before I move on to the significant events of 1956, a couple of items left over from 1955 are worth mentioning here. In mid-July 1955, Chuck Berry started down a long pathway of hits with his *Maybelline*. Berry became one of the most popular rock and roll singers who ever lived. His songs served as classic examples of the abandonment of the older, slower R&B style in favor of a faster tempo and light-hearted lyrics.

Gee Records began late in 1955, at about the same time that Little Richard became a household word. Gee had a short-lived R&B series and then began putting out rock and roll early in 1956. Over the next few years the George Goldner-directed organization produced hits by the Cleftones, Heartbeats, Downbeats, Harptones, and Angels, but its most important discovery was a youth named Frankie Lymon. Frankie penned a tune called *Why Do Fools Fall In Love*, and recorded it for Gee with his group, the Teenagers (Sherman Barnes,

Joe Negroni, Jim Merchant, Herman Santiago). The group's name was indeed appropriate. In fact, it was this teen-type sound, produced by boys whose voices hadn't changed, that became a dominant force in the music world for years to come. The idea was not a new one. The Castelles had recorded for Grand as early as 1953 with a teenage sound, and, in fact, lead singer George Grant revealed in a recent interview that he had been in high school when the Castelles records were released. Furthermore, another Grand group called the Cherokees, consisted of boys in their *early teens*. Pictures of some pre-1956 groups suggest that there were other youngsters involved in the record business. The big difference between these groups and Frankie Lymon's was that the latter was properly promoted and became an instant sensation. *Why Do Fools Fall In Love* was followed by *I Want You To Be My Girl*, *I Promise To Remember*, and *I'm Not A Juvenile Delinquent*. In a few years, Frankie's voice changed and the Teenagers faded out of sight. In the mid-sixties Lymon tried to make a comeback as a nightclub singer but this attempt was cut short by his untimely death.

The success of Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers did not go unnoticed. Frankie's brothers, Tim and Lewis, sounded like him and they had groups of their own. Lewis Lymon and the Teenchords (David Little, Lyndon Harold, Ralph Vaughn, Rosileo Rocca) sang *Lydia* and *I'm Not Too Young To Fall In Love* while Timmy Lymon and the Tellers had *Tears Fell From My Eyes*. The major R&B companies began competing against each other to find another Frankie Lymon. Savoy found the Cubs, a group led by a fourteen year old, while Herald signed "Little Butchie" Saunders and his Buddies.

"Little Butchie" was nine years old at that time. Little Anthony and the Imperials (originally known as the Duponts and also as the Chesters) have outlasted all the other "teen-sound" groups and still are very good. Some of the other "teen-sound" groups of the mid and late fifties included the Juveniles (members came from rival teen gangs), Valchords, Students, Schoolboys, Chanters and Kodoks.

1956

Hull had already released its first record by early 1956. It was entitled *Crazy For You*, and featured an unknown group called the Heartbeats. It didn't take the Heartbeats long to lose their anonymity as followup *Darling How Long* also earned some spins from disc jockeys (see 1957).

Devil Or Angel made the pop chart in February. It was one of the greatest successes ever for the Clovers. A few years later *Devil Or Angel* became a hit all over again for teenage idol Bobby Vee.

The Flash label began its rather brief existence in April. A few short months later its principal group, the Jayhawks, produced the original version of *Stranded In The Jungle*. Flash also had records by the Hornets, Cubans, and Arrows in its three-year history.

June was an important month for Herald Records and the whole R&B scene. Herald's new subsidiary, Ember, had recently signed a group from New Haven, Connecticut, known as the Five Satins. Under the name of the Scarlets, the group had even been responsible for a few mild hits on Bobby Robinson's Red Robin label. After the name change they made a record called *I Remember (In The Still Of The Night)*. Ember executives

liked the song, worked with the group on it and released the finished product on June 9. It moved quickly to the top and soon became one of the great all-time standards.

In mid-June *Let The Good Times Roll* was released by Aladdin. Its climb to the top paralleled that of *In The Still Of The Night*. Shirley and Lee had been recording on Aladdin for several years but *Let The Good Times Roll* was their first really big hit. Like so many other tunes of the Rock 'n Roll Era, its mood was one of happiness and its lyrics mentioned the expression of happiness through dancing. The belated success of this duo served as an inspiration to other male-female combinations like Gene and Eunice, Mickey and Sylvia, and Peaches and Herb.

On or about August 25, Whirlin Disc issued its first release. Whirlin Disc 100 was entitled *The Closer You Are*, and it featured a group that produced many fine ballads throughout the Rock And Roll Era. The group was called the Channels and among their hits were *My Love Will Never Die*, *Flames In My Heart*, and *That's My Desire*. In all, the label only released ten different records but many of these were among the better releases of the era. The label's lineup included the Continentals, Pretenders, Quadrells, and Empires.

Nineteen fifty-six was a big year for New York's rock and roll disc jockeys. *Doctor Jive* and Alan Freed became extremely popular. Freed was especially well-known, partially on the basis of his several rock and roll parties, which dated back as far as January 1955. The parties were held in theaters or large halls and they featured some of the biggest names of the day. They were so successful that some of Freed's imitators began holding similar affairs. For example, WAMO disc jockey,

Porky Chedwick, promoted many such shows in Pittsburgh up into the early sixties. Another practice which stemmed from Freed's parties was the record hop or teen night club dance highlighted by the appearance of a "name" artist like Jackie Wilson or Lee Andrews. In fact, it was at just such an affair that I met Lee Andrews in 1965.

Freed established himself as the "King of Rock" in December, 1956. His first movie, "Rock, Rock, Rock" debuted in New York on December 5. Freed made one or two other films in the late fifties also. Through the use of such a medium, Freed was able to take his dance parties into every little nook and cranny of the nation. I'm only exaggerating slightly when I use the words "dance parties" here because the films were little more than that. The general structure of these films was such that it provided an opportunity for several artists to sing one or two numbers, which was essentially what went on at a dance party or rock and roll show. Chuck Berry, Clyde McPhatter, and the Moonglows were among those appearing in Freed's movies. Incidentally, some readers may remember a take-off on the Freed "flicks" that appeared about 1964 and featured James Brown and the Supremes, among others.

In spite of the fact that Elvis Presley burst on to the scene early in 1956 and broke the ground for the acceptance of many black artists, this didn't guarantee the success of every good R&B record. Some deserving ones from that year were: *Little Dream Girl* — Cashmeres—Herald 474; *A Kiss And A Vow* — Nitecaps—Groove 0134; and *You Were Sent Down From Heaven* — Lamplighters—Federal 12255.

1957

In mid-January of 1957 newly-founded Fee Bee Records released *Come Go With Me* in the Pittsburgh area. The song was done by a group stationed at a nearby Air Force base. The Del-Vikings had done a version of *Over The Rainbow* (for Luniverse) that went nowhere, but rocker *Come Go With Me* was a smash, as were *Whispering Bells* and *What Made Maggie Run*. Once it became evident that the record was going to "take off", Dot purchased *Come Go With Me* and issued it on its own label. One of the group's unsuccessful records for Fee Bee was a beautiful ballad called *Willette*. Most Del-Viking records featured "Kripp" Johnson but this one highlighted the talents of one Charles Jackson. Charles began using the nickname "Chuck" after he left the group, and he is still one of the biggest names in the R&B world today. The original group split into two or three splinter groups, with the most important of these being the group that recorded *How Could You*, *Come Along With Me*, and *Snow-bound* for Mercury. Attempts to revive the group occurred as late as 1964 when Pittsburgh's Gateway label issued a Del-Viking record called *We Three*. The attempt could best be summarized as too little and too late. *We Three* didn't sound a whole lot like the Del-Vikings of old, and at that time the soul sound was beginning to catch on.

Excello released *Little Darlin* by the Gladiolas about the same time as *Come Go With Me* was issued. The Gladiolas were from Lancaster, South Carolina and they had appeared a number of times locally before they tried recording. They had to borrow some money to drive to Nashville where they cut a record. *Little*

Darlin became a big record for the group even though a cover version by a white group called the Diamonds sold more copies. The song was written by Gladiolas' lead singer Maurice Williams. Excello released three other Gladiolas' records, all of which were composed by Williams, but none of them enjoyed the success of *Little Darlin*. A few years later, as Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs, the group made it big with *Stay*. Though the Zodiacs released a few records after *Stay*, they never really achieved national recognition again. As recently as 1969, the Zodiacs were playing small nightclubs around Columbia, South Carolina.

The Winley label probably started in February of 1957. Winley was a New York label that featured two fine groups in the Jesters and Paragons. Winley also had the Duponts, Collegians, Emanons, and even the Clovers, but the latter group was well past its prime when it signed with Winley.

On February 16, "The Girl Can't Help It" made its movie debut. It was the first big budget rock movie. The late Jayne Mansfield provided the visual fireworks, while Little Richard sang the theme song and the Platters and several other rock stars appeared briefly.

At about the same time as "The Girl Can't Help It" a new song was sky-rocketing up the charts. The Heartbeats' *A Thousand Miles Away* has since become one of the tunes most readily associated with the Rock and Roll Age.

Early in May, professional basketball star Don Barksdale went into the record business. His Oakland, California-based Rhythm label was not a highly lucrative undertaking but he turned out some respectable sounds by unknowns like the Mondellos, the Lyrics, and the

Spinners (no relation to the Spinners who recorded for Tri-Phi and/or Motown).

On May 13, the Ebb label released its first sides. Ebb was a West Coast label that managed to stay in business for only about two years, but its lineup included such fine artists as Tony Allen, the Jaguars, the Tempmentals, the Ambers (featuring Johnny Mathis' brother Ralph), Roulettes, and the Hollywood Flames. You may remember two hits by the latter group on Ebb: *Buzz*, *Buzz, Buzz*, and *There Is Something On Your Mind*.

Late in June another "giant" was issued — *Deserie* by the Charts. Not only was it the first release for the new group but it also marked the beginning of the Everlast label (see 1963). Like so many other groups, the Charts only had one big hit before fading into obscurity. They did make a number of unsuccessful attempts to come up with another hit. In fact, I believe that the group made six other records on Everlast.

Everlast had a companion label in the short-lived Holiday. Holiday only lasted about one year but it featured such groups as the Bopchords, the Harmonaires, the Pretenders, the Thunderbirds, the Ladders, and the Lovenotes. The Lovenotes had one fair-sized hit for Holiday entitled *United*. Other versions of this song have since appeared by two highly-regarded groups, the Charms and the Jive Five.

In the first week of July, the End label released its first record, *It Took A Long Time*, by Malcolm Dodds and the Tunedrops (number 1000). With George Goldner at the helm, End became a major power until the waning months of the Rock Era (see 1963). One of the reasons for the success of the new label was not long in coming. A group of high school girls who wanted

an autograph from Richard Barrett (then lead singer of the Valentines, a group contracted to Goldner's Rama label) became the envy of their friends when they blossomed into overnight stars with *He's Gone*. Lead singer Arlene Smith, who wrote the song, told me that she was embarrassed when the record became a big hit. Her distress stemmed from the fact that *He's Gone* was the story of her experiences with her ex-boyfriend. Arlene and the rest of the girls (Rene Minus, Sonja Goring, Jackie Landry, and Lois Harris) went on to less embarrassing hits like *Maybe, I Love You So*, and *Whoever You Are*. In the meantime, End's companion label Gone had opened with a flourish only a few weeks before. Gone stayed on the music scene about as long as End and turned out about as many records. Gone's principal attractions were the Dubs, Johnnie and Joe, the Isley Brothers, the Deltas, the Channels, and the Carousels. The label also had an interesting artist named Ral Donner who did a pretty good imitation of Elvis.

The disadvantages of recording for a small, independent company have been alluded to in earlier chapters. One of the better examples can be seen in the career of Lee Andrews and the Hearts (Roy and Wendell Calhoun, Ted Weems, Tammey Currey), a group from Philadelphia. As early as May, 1954 they had recorded *Maybe You'll Be There* for the Rainbow label. This recording was followed by several other fine sides for Rainbow and Gotham, but both of these companies had folded by November, 1957, when Chess released *Tear-drops*. Chess had the reputation and facilities to produce hits and *Teardrops* soon became a big seller.

By the early part of December a rapidly-climbing record called *You Send Me* had become number one on

most R&B charts. The artist was a handsome young man who had formerly sung with the Soul Stirrers, one of the greatest Negro gospel groups. "Sam Cooke was one of the nicest guys I ever worked with", was Jackie Wilson's reply to a question I once asked about his favorite show biz people. Certainly the statement about nice guys finishing last didn't apply to Cooke, as he succeeded in following *You Send Me* with a number of other big hits over the next few years. Cooke's voice was "light" enough to appeal to a very broad audience and indeed, many of his records were rather far removed from the rhythm and blues mainstream (see 1965).

Nineteen fifty-seven was the last year of operation for four great labels of the previous era. United and States, two related Chicago labels, shut down about December, 1957. At about the same time Jules Bihari discontinued the Modern and RPM labels. The Kent label replaced them but Kent had focused its attention on the reissue of a few hits from RPM and Modern (such as *Cherry Pie* by Marvin and Johnny and *Why Don't You Write Me* by the Jacks), and the blues offerings of B.B. King. Modern has since been reactivated (about 1965) but without much luck for its ownership.

By late 1957, the rock-a-billy trend sparked by Elvis was well underway. While this movement gradually drifted further and further from the R&B mainstream and finally choked itself to death with performers who had little or no talent, a few of the rock-a-billies are worthy of mention here. Gene Vincent was a sailor from Virginia who was undoubtedly influenced by the more popular R&B artists of the day. His *Be-Bop-A-Lula*, a big hit on Capitol, was done with the same intense feeling that characterized most of the black

artists. Another young white who sang with a great deal of conviction was Buddy Holly. Holly, who hailed from New Mexico, produced some highly unique and popular records, like *Peggy Sue*, *That'll Be The Day*, *Oh Boy*, and *Rave On*. The Sun label had Carl Perkins, of *Blue Suede Shoes* fame, and Jerry Lee Lewis, who came closer than any white man to capturing the style of Little Richard. Jerry Lee is most often remembered for *Breathless*, *Great Balls of Fire*, and *Whole Lot of Shakin' Goin' On*.

Nineteen fifty-seven saw the release of the Drifters' *It Was A Tear, For Better Or For Worse* by the Medallions, *One Hundred Years From Today* by the Mondellos, and *You Took My Love* by the Cellos.

1958

Remember *Get A Job* by the Silhouettes? It became number one on *Billboard's* R&B list on February 10, 1958.

In March, Josie Records released number 835, a song that asked the question *Do You Wanna Dance?* It became a big hit, but of special importance is the fact that this was one of the earliest dance records. Dance records became very big over the next few years, with many of the titles citing the names of such bizarre dances as *The Fly*, *The Junkernoo*, and *The Watusi*. Of no less importance is the story of Bobby Freeman, the artist who wrote and recorded *Do You Wanna Dance?* At the time of the record's release, Bobby was still a year away from graduating from San Francisco's Mission High School. Even more amazing is the fact that Bobby organized and recorded with a group called the Romancers when he was fourteen. The Romancers made

I Still Remember and *This Is Goodbye* for Dootone at that time. Although Freeman never had another hit of the status of *Do You Wanna Dance?*, he enjoyed an active recording career until at least as late as 1966.

Onyx Records folded in March after its twentieth release, *Can I Walk You Home* by the Velours. The label had been in existence for about two years with such artists as the Pearls, Impressors, Wanderers, and Monteys, in addition to the Velours. The label's closing most likely involved some sort of deal with MGM, because *Can I Walk You Home* appeared on Orbit, a short-lived MGM subsidiary. About April 20, MGM introduced Cub, a successor to Orbit, and a label probably meant to get MGM into the thick of the competition for rhythm and blues hits. Further evidence of an Onyx-MGM agreement was provided by subsequent Cub releases by the Impressors and Wanderers. Cub lasted until well into the Soul Era. I believe it was inactive for awhile, but if so it was active again about 1967. MGM has never been able to "get it together" on rhythm and blues over the last twenty years, although the company has sporadically produced a few fine records. Its Cub subsidiary was no exception. Its artist repertoire gradually became entirely white and its sound reflected that drift. The label did release some good material at one time or another by the following: Preludes, Harptones, 5 Satins, Marie and the Deccors, Eltones, and Jimmy "Handy Man" Jones. Jones left the Pretenders to join Cub and he made the switch pay off by becoming a big single attraction.

Tragedy struck the R&B world in April with the news of Chuck Willis' death. As a singer, Willis had one of those strange styles that struck me as a compromise be-

tween blues and R&B. Although he has been categorized with down-home Bluesmen like B.B. King and Lightning Hopkins, I question the accuracy of this. Although he was very bluesy on *Going To The River* and some other early material for Okeh, he was occasionally backed by groups like the Royals (no relation to the group that later became the Midnighters) and the Sandmen. On some of his later material like *It's Too Late* and *Juanita* he was supported by a chorus of females. *Hang Up My Rock And Roll Shoes* hardly seems like an appropriate title for a blues theme either. Many of his better tunes could be and often were adapted to suit various groups. In fact, I see Chuck Willis' songwriting talents as having been at least as important as his singing. Who can deny the beauty of *Close Your Eyes* or *Don't Deceive Me*, to cite two of his finest.

In mid-June, Mercury transferred its master of *One Summer Night* from a subsidiary to the parent label and it immediately began a meteoric rise to the top. Like the Platters, the Danleers were a black group that sounded almost white. The Danleers didn't have the staying power of the Platters, however, and they faded rapidly from the music scene. *One Summer Night* represents the epitome of the moon-in-June type lyrics that characterized many of the Rock Era ballads. On the other hand, the Danleers, like most other moon-in-Juners, possessed a strong lead voice and excellent harmony, qualities which have sometimes been ignored in more recent years (see introduction preceding 1964).

About September 1, another classic was released; it was the beautiful version of *Ten Commandments Of Love* by the Moonglows. Unfortunately, it was the last big hit for one of the greatest groups of all time.

Most readers will remember the Crests recording of *Sixteen Candles*. It came out on November 10 and was one of the big hits of the winter of 1958–1959. The Crests were led by Johnny Maestro, who today sings for a rock group called the Brooklyn Bridge. The Crests were quite popular over a period of a year or so. During this period they made *Six Nights A Week*, *The Angels Listened In*, *Trouble In Paradise*, and *Flower of Love*. They were an integrated group, two whites and two blacks. The Coed label, on which the Crests' records appeared, rose with the good fortune of the Crests and the Rivas (of *Count Every Star* and *Moonlight Cocktails* fame).

Paralleling the rise of the Crests was the start of Pittsburgh's Calico label. Calico featured a group that sounded about as R&B-ish as a white group could. Featuring Jimmy Beaumont, the Skyliners sold a lot of copies over the next couple of years with tunes like *Since I Don't Have You*, *This I Swear*, and *Pennies From Heaven*.

In mid-December, the Scepter label got its start. The New York-based outfit got off to a fine start with a group of girls known as the Shirelles. The Shirelles had recorded *I Met Him On A Sunday* for Decca, but their popularity soared to greater heights with their many Scepter hits. In fact, it is probably fair to say that the Shirelles were the Supremes of 1959–1961. That is not to say that their styles were identical, but that both groups enjoyed widespread popularity. Some of the Shirelles biggest hits include *Dedicated To The One I Love*, *Baby It's You*, *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow*, and *Soldier Boy*. A few years later, when the popularity of the Shirelles began to fade, Scepter came up with a

young girl from East Orange, New Jersey named Dionne Warwick. As I write this she is still one of the most popular singers on the contemporary scene.

By the end of 1958, a television show called American Bandstand was quite the rage, and its popularity was to continue well into the sixties. It had originated as early as 1952 in the form of a radio program called Bandstand, but when Dick Clark took over its reins in 1956, it really caught on. It had been on nationwide television only since 1957. The show was basically a kind of semi-spontaneous dance party for teenagers, with Clark acting as host and disc jockey. Guest appearances by popular singers often highlighted the program. After a time some of the kids who appeared regularly as dancers became an important part of the show. Though others have written about American Bandstand, praising Clark and the show's wholesome outlook; I believe that, in a sense that extends beyond the Nielsen ratings, the show was a failure. I think it failed not so much for what it did, but for what it didn't do. In spite of the fact that much of the style of the songs and dances were black-originated, precious little was done to acknowledge this. The overwhelming majority of the kids who appeared on the show were white and reflected white middle class values, as did Clark. Both the records that were aired and the selection of guests was heavily weighted in favor of whites, many of whom had little or no talent. To be sure, a few token blacks were included, but for the most part these artists leaned heavily toward the mainstream of white popular music. Most of them were already big stars. In the meantime American Bandstand "made" many white performers into big drawing cards. Such

great but unheralded R&B artists as the Paragons, the Jesters, the Desires, the Cufflinks, the Sequins, the Orientals – believe me, the complete list would include several hundred names – all these artists could have used the television exposure given to someone like Fabian, for example.

Some of 1958's more noteworthy releases included *Words of Wisdom* by the Terrace tones, *Chapel Bells* by the Fascinators, *Oo-Wee Baby*, by the Ivytones, *Rama Lama Ding Dong* by the Edsels, and *You* by the Aquatones.

1959

The Original Sound label started about mid-January. From time to time the label has featured artists like Preston Epps, the Jaguars, Don Julian and the Meadowlarks, and the Penguins. Original Sound is most famous, however, for its oldies albums. Its albums of classics like *Story Untold* by the Nutmegs and *When You Dance* by the Turbans were issued long before the practice became common.

The new year proved to be a happy one for End's two big groups, the Flamingos, and Little Anthony and the Imperials. The Imperials came up with *Wishful Thinking*, *Prayer And A Jukebox*, and *Shimmy Shimmy Ko Ko Bop*, during 1959, while the Flamingos chipped in with *But Not For Me*, *I Only Have Eyes For You*, *Love Walked In*, and *I Was Such A Fool*.

In the spring, King Records released *The Twist* by Hank Ballard and the Midnighters. It went nowhere. A year or so later Chubby Checker recorded it and appeared on a national television show singing the song. Most readers are old enough to remember what hap-

pened next. The new dance craze swept the nation and many of the record titles that came out in 1961 and 1962 bore reference to the dance.

In mid-April, Morty Craft started the Warwick and Tel labels. Tel didn't last very long but turned out a fine record called *Dream Of Love* by the Nutmegs. Warwick lasted somewhat longer and its total output was greater, but little of it was rhythm and blues. The Harptones, the Genies, and the duo of Shirley and Lee all made a few vocals for Warwick while the label also put out a few rocking instrumentals.

Of more significance was the initial release by V-Tone Records, also in mid-April. V-Tone produced quite a few nice records over the next two or three years. The labels' artist repertoire included the Cruisers, Tops, Fashions, Dreamlovers, and Fay Simmons.

On April 20, the Apex label was announced. The Chicago-based company did not last very long, possibly because it had only one asset, a group called the Sheppards. Led by "Bunky" Sheppard the group's *Island of Love* was a big seller.

By May Day it was obvious that the Falcons record of *You're So Fine* was destined to be a hit. The tune had originally been released by Flick, a small label located in the Falcon's hometown of Detroit. At that time, the group consisted of Joe Stubbs, Eddie Floyd, Benny Rice, Will Schofield, and Lance Finnie. With Floyd singing the lead, the Falcons had made a record in 1956 for Mercury called *This Day*. It went nowhere. Not long after *You're So Fine* and a couple of follow-up waxings, the group went to Lupine Records and acquired a new lead voice, that of one Wilson Pickett.

In May, Atlantic released *There Goes My Baby* by

the Drifters. Actually, the Drifters were not the Drifters. That is, the group that recorded *There Goes My Baby* was not the original group started by Clyde McPhatter. Remnants of the McPhatter group made *Drip Drop* about mid-1958 and then disbanded. This left manager George Treadwell in an extremely awkward position, inasmuch as he had some personal appearance contracts to fulfill. In his search for some sort of replacement he ran across a veteran group called the Five Crowns. Treadwell promptly signed the group to Atlantic and changed their name to the Drifters. This was indeed a fortunate decision. The Five Crowns had done a number of excellent sides dating back to about 1952 when they made *A Star* and *Alone Again* for Rainbow. More recently they had been on the R&B label with a tune called *Kiss and Make Up*. There was at least one personnel change during these years with the end result being that the 1959 Drifters were Ben E. King, Ellsberry Hobbs, Charlie Thomas, and Doc Green. To this day many people still think that the 1959 Drifters were the same as the 1953 group. Atlantic never bothered to clear up this misconception, and even added to it by releasing older material done by McPhatter's group on the flip sides of *I Count The Tears*, *Some Kind of Wonderful*, and *Please Stay*. The 1959 Drifters also had great success with tunes like *Dance With Me*, *This Magic Moment*, *Lonely Winds*, and *Save The Last Dance For Me* (see 1964). Another item concerning the Drifters deserves attention. The inventive minds of Leiber and Stoller had been assigned to the task of producing hits for the group. *There Goes My Baby* was more than just a nice record. It was either the very first or one of the very first attempts to back an R&B with strings. While Leiber and

Stoller were able to pull this off, I am sorry to say that it became a fad. I have nothing against strings or fads, but many other record companies, in trying to capture a string sound, succeeded only in "cluttering up" their records and obscuring whatever vocal talents their artists possessed.

Late in July another short-lived label started. This one was Audicon; it featured a white group called the Passions and Bill Baker, a one-time lead singer with the Five Satins.

About August 31, RCA Victor released *Shout*, a tune by the Isley Brothers that was greatly aided by their enthusiastic performance. This song marked a turning point in the career of the three-man group. Prior to *Shout* the Isleys had made a number of ballads that were good but didn't sell. Some of these included *Angels Cried* for Teenage, as early as 1956, *Don't Be Jealous* for the Cindy label, and *My Love* for Gone Records. *Respectable* proved to be a respectable choice to follow *Shout*. The Isleys remained in the public eye for the next several years on the strength of *Twist And Shout* and a number of records for Atlantic and Tamla.

A *de-emphasis* on R&B production occurred in what had been a major independent label. The Dooto (formerly Dootone) Record Company had been among the leaders in the production of quality R&B since 1954. Most record companies run into trouble when they lose top recording stars or key artists and repertoire men or are unable to adapt to changing musical trends. But Dooto's fadeout was radically different. There was no hard and fast date on which the company put out its last record, nor was the fadeout directly related to the usual reasons that record companies call it quits. Ever hear of

Redd Foxx? Well, Dootone began issuing his humorous material as early as February, 1956, and as Foxx gradually gained popularity, Dooto became less interested in its vocal groups. By mid-1959 it was clear that Dooto planned to promote Foxx to the hilt. Advertisements in the trade magazines began to focus on Foxx's comedy singles and albums, while the Cufflinks and Medallions were practically ignored. From April, 1959, to sometime in 1963, when Dooto quit producing new singles altogether, its total output was only twenty-seven releases. Of these at least five were by Foxx, and one or two of the others were also comedy. Dooto didn't go out of business though; it continues on to the present day living on the occasional reissue of an old hit and its Redd Foxx material.

On or about October 18, ABC Paramount released its first record by the Dubs. The group made several records for ABC and although most of them were pretty good, the days of glory for the Dubs were over. There was not to be another *Chapel Of Dreams* or *Could This Be Magic*.

Nineteen fifty-nine was one of the most successful years for female vocalists. Although most of the artists I've mentioned up to this point were males, the girls were not entirely inactive by any means. Although the Teen Queens, one of the first female groups to win recognition, were no longer making hits, the Quintones and the Shirelles were very popular (see 1958) and several other groups came into their own in 1959. The Chantels, whose voices were angelic, sold a lot of records for End and were well known and widely imitated. Imitators included: the Devaurs, whose *Where Are You* was very nicely done; the Del Rios *I'm Crying*; and

the Clickettes with *To Be A Part Of You*. The Bobbettes, of *Mr. Lee* fame, were yet another femme group still singing in 1959.

Some of 1959's more interesting sounds included: *Romance In The Spring* by the Five Roses on Nu Kat 100; *Lilly* by the Blendtones on MGM 12782; *Endless Love* by the Capris on Tender 518; and *Needed* by the Voicemasters on Anna 102.

1960

By the early part of 1960, the record industry began to sit up and take notice of a strange new trend. Old hits by some of the stars of yester-year were springing to life all over again. At that time the movement was spearheaded by a desire for such greats as *I Remember (In The Still Of The Night)*, *Story Untold* and *Stranded In The Jungle*. Over the years the list of most-sought-after old records has changed somewhat, but the concept of the "oldie" is still very much alive.

In June an empire began. Like Rome, it didn't happen in a day. It started with Motown 1000, a since-forgotten record by a group called the Satintones. Berry Gordy, who eventually became a millionaire, had written and produced some songs for other record companies. He was not a stranger to the business; nor was William "Smokey" Robinson, a friend of Gordy who sang with a group called the Miracles. The Miracles had already recorded a couple of numbers for End and Chess when they cast their lot with Gordy. Gordy started the Tamla label a couple of weeks after Motown and he soon had some hits going with Barrett Strong's *Money, Way Over There*, and *Shop Around* by the Miracles. In the meantime, Mary Wells came along and rescued the Mo-

town label from an early demise with records like *Bye Bye Baby*, *You Beat Me To The Punch*, and *Two Lovers*. (For more on Motown see 1961.)

In August, Aladdin Records released number 3466. Shortly after this the company closed down and another chapter in the history of rhythm and blues was ended. The end of Aladdin also meant a gradual disappearance of some of the greatest material ever recorded. The company was purchased by Imperial, and Imperial has since sold out to Liberty. Not long ago Liberty issued a few albums containing some old Aladdin material and there is reason to hope that more will be forthcoming.

As the astute reader has undoubtedly noticed by this time, many artists cut several records and make many personal appearances before they make it to the top, while others are overnight sensations and still others never get anywhere. An example of the former was Joe Simon, who became a well-known soul artist in 1967. On August 15, 1960 Hush Records issued a waxing by Joe. Although I believe it was his first, it is conceivable that he had recorded even earlier. The point is, of course, that Simon was around for many years before things began happening for him.

By September, it was obvious that a group called the Olympics was having a hot year with their third consecutive hit. The Olympics featured Walt Ward, Charles Fizer, Melvin King, and lead, Eddie Lewis. The group came to fame on the strength of hits like *Western Movies*, *Big Boy Pete*, *Baby (Hully Gully)*, and *Shimmy Like Kate*.

About September 5, Specialty Records issued number 689, *Pow Wow* by Lois and Louis. With this release once-mighty Specialty went inactive. A few years later

it released a Little Richard record and since then a couple of sporadic attempts to revive it have met with failure. President Art Rupe has seen fit to release a few oldies albums in recent years.

The Tag label began with the coming of October. Tag was known for two records by the Chimes called *I'm In The Mood For Love* and *Once In Awhile*. The Carthays made a nice record for Tag called *So Bad*, but apart from that and the few Chimes recordings, little is known about the label. It certainly did not stay in existence for any great length of time.

The folks at Scepter (see 1958) were on the move, and expansion became a reality about November, 1960 when the Wand subsidiary was initiated. Wand has remained on the R&B scene for quite some time, although I believe it is currently inactive. In any event, Wand featured Chuck Jackson, Maxine Brown, the Isley Brothers, and the Titones. Most of Chuck Jackson's big hit records (*I Don't Want To Cry*, *Any Day Now*, *Getting Ready For The Heartbreak*) were made for Wand.

About December 12, the Lucky Four label began in Chicago. Lucky Four had one great group in the Swingin Hearts. Unfortunately, both the Lucky Four and the Swingin Hearts were short-lived, although the group was around long enough to make the beautiful *Please Say It Isn't So*.

In the winter of 1960, Hull released *Little Boy Blue* by the Elegants; in the spring Abner issued *That You Love Me* by the Impressions; in the summer Vee Jay issued its last Spaniels record, one entitled *I Know*. With fall came Little Jan and the Radiants doing *Now Is The Hour* for Clock.

1961

Early in 1961, probably in January, the Beltone label started. Beltone was a success from the beginning for two principal reasons. They were 1) Bobby Lewis, and 2) The Jive Five. Bobby Lewis is best remembered as the artist who, by *Tossin And Turnin* all night, came up with a big hit. The Jive Five (Jerome Hanna, Billy Prophet, Rich Harris, Norm Johnson, and lead, Eugene Pitt) had two big hits with *My True Story* and *What Time Is It*, as well as minor successes with *Rain*, *These Golden Rings*, and *No Not Again*. For reasons I've never understood, Beltone folded after about two years in the record business.

On February 6, the Companion label released the Harptones' rendition of *All In My Mind*. Hot on the heels of this came *What Will I Tell My Heart* by the same group. The Harptones made one other record after that, but my point is that this fine group of songsters were on the last legs of a recording career that extended all the way back to 1953.

On the thirteenth of February, Colpix released the Marcells' version of *Blue Moon*. It became a big seller. The Marcells were an integrated group from Pittsburgh who scored later successes with *Heartaches* and *My Melancholy Baby*. They took old well-known ballads, restructured them to fit a fast-paced rock and roll beat, and somehow still managed to sell copies. At that time many groups made use of such highly meaningful phrases as "do wow wow" or "Oom poppa doo ron" but the Marcells' recordings were heavily saturated with them.

In the meantime, in New York, a fellow known as "Swingin' Slim" was beginning to make his way into the public eye. Irving "Slim" Rose owned a record shop and

had jumped on the oldies bandwagon head first. But "Slim" was not content with merely selling a few old R&B records. He took an active role in persuading several record companies to reissue some of their finest old records and generated a great deal of interest by playing old sounds on a succession of radio programs that he hosted. Still not satisfied, he originated Times Square Records and issued his first record on March 6, 1961. A well-publicized contest resulted in the naming of "Slim's" first group, the Timetones. The integrated Timetones never went on to fame and fortune but they did sell enough copies to persuade "Slim" to issue more records. He also managed to buy some good, unreleased material from other companies and issue it on his own label. The Flamingos' version of *Lovely Way To Spend An Evening* and the Nutmegs *You're Crying*, to name just two, would have never been available to the public had it not been for "Slim" (see 1965).

On April 10, Tamla issued number 54038, *I Want A Guy* backed with *Never Again*. The artists were three young girls from Detroit—Florence Ballard, Mary Wilson, and Diana Ross. Their first record was a flop as were the next two or three.

A trio of label beginnings are lumped together here because they occurred between May 8 and June 5, and also because the sounds they produced were fairly typical of the ballad style common to the latter part of the Rock 'n Roll Era. The first to appear was Don-el, a Philadelphia label that featured the Daychords. The Daychords usually sported a girl lead named Roxy in front of a male group. Don-el also had a female group called the Kittens. The second label, called Bargain, stemmed from New York. Bargain had a group called the Star-

fires and a girl named Betty Freeman who sounded like Maxine Brown. The third label started in Detroit under the direction of Harvey Fuqua, who had been, along with Bobby Lester, one of the Moonglows' lead singers. Tri-Phi featured the Spinners, a pretty decent group that Harvey trained to sound vaguely reminiscent of the Moonglows. None of the three labels lasted very long.

At this point, I would like to continue with more information about Harvey Fuqua. Along with Berry Gordy, he was one of the early blacks to run his own record business. He even continued to record himself, singing with the Quails and going solo on *Any Way You Wanta* in 1962. When he decided to give up his own labels, he went with Motown and brought the Spinners with him. Harvey became a Motown vice president and married Berry Gordy's sister. He is unique in that, of all the artists who recorded in the early fifties, and later quit, he was one of the very few to make it big doing something besides singing. Only Buzz Willis of the Solitaires, who has a good job with RCA Victor, can approach Fuqua. This is not to say that all the old-timers became bums but that most of them were only able to get mediocre jobs with a moderate income once their singing careers were finished.

On August 21, a record was released on the Miracle label with the unlikely title *Oh Mother Of Mine*. The reader would not likely identify the group by the flip side, *Romance Without Finance*. The group that sang these two sides was called the Temptations. The record was their first and it went nowhere.

Late in October, the Philles label got its start, courtesy of Phil Spector. Philles 100 was done by a female group called the Crystals and it was called *There's No*

Other (Like My Baby). The Crystals became quite popular on the strength of this record and follow ups like *He's A Rebel* and *Da Doo Ron Ron*. The Crystals sounded something like the Shirelles. Phil Spector has been seen by some as an innovator and a great pioneer in rhythm and blues. I don't wish to content that Spector didn't make a lot of money but a pioneer he was not. Actually, much of the Crystals stuff was diluted to suit the taste of white teenagers. That it was not so far removed from the R&B mainstream was due to the fact that the mainstream itself had widened. Whites had so influenced the music and black artists were so anxious to attract white record buyers that the music was becoming rather lukewarm.

The Diamond label began in November as did Bethlehem. Diamond was a New York label that featured Johnny Thunder. It also made a couple of decent records by the Originals and the Swingin' Hearts, but generally it was of little importance for R&B lovers. Bethlehem was a subsidiary of King that was probably meant to take over where Deluxe and Federal left off. Neither of the latter two had produced any hits in some time. Bethlehem turned out a few nice records by Tony Allen, the Pretenders, the Ascots (who were also on King) and the Florescents, but it was never a commercial success and King abandoned the label after a couple of years. Both Federal and Deluxe were also deactivated only to be revived again, but this revival occurred well into the Soul Era.

Among the better releases for the year 1961 were: *Darling (Please Bring Your Love)* by Phil and Harv on Rampart 611; Chris Kenner's *Packin' Up* on Instant 3234; the Daylighters' *Oh What A Way To Be Loved on*

Nike 10011; and Gary U.S. Bonds' big sellers, *Quarter To Three* and *School Is Out*, on Le Grand 1006 and 1009 respectively.

1962

In January, 1962, the Baronet label began. It lasted only long enough to turn out two or three good records by a group called the Metalics.

Another first occurred in February. Not for a label this time, but for an artist. Marvin Gaye's first record as a single attraction was on Tamla and it was called *Sandman*. *Sandman* didn't do much, but Marvin Gaye has made up for it many times over with hit after hit.

In mid-March, Jay Gee Records, owner of both Josie and Jubilee labels, initiated the Chex label. Chex only released about 12 records in its brief history but one of them, *I Love You*, by the Volumes, was a big hit. The Volumes had another record called *The Bell*. Another noteworthy Chex group was known as the Technics.

In early April, Berry Gordy started the Gordy label, by releasing *Isn't She Pretty*, a tune recorded by the Temptations. All of their big hits through the years have been on Gordy, although *Isn't She Pretty* didn't do much. If the Temps were not an immediate sensation, another early Gordy group was. The Contours hit the jackpot on the first try with *Do You Love Me*. *Don't Let Her Be Your Baby* and *First I Look At The Purse* also made it big, but the Contours slowly faded while the Temps gradually captured the public eye.

On April 21, newly-formed New Time released its first record. New Time didn't last long but it did turn out a couple of records by Little Anthony and the Imperials. Furthermore, it started a young group called

Patti Labelle and the Bluebelles down recognition road with *Down The Aisle*.

Late in April, ABC Paramount issued an unusual record by Ray Charles. *I Can't Stop Lovin You* was not just a million-seller; Ray Charles had already sold an awful lot of wax during his career. The unusual aspect of this record was the fact that Ray had taken a traditionally country and western tune and adapted it to his own personal blend of rhythm and blues. This record serves as a perfect illustration of a point I made earlier in the book, namely that *R&B is a way of singing, a style, rather than a song or group of songs*.

In June, Atlantic released its first Falcons record. The Falcons had recently recorded for Lu Pine, a label that Atlantic had distributed.

About August 4, Vee Jay put a new record on the market by a new group called the Four Seasons. Actually the group had been alive and kicking for several years, though not as the Four Seasons. In 1956 the Four Seasons made renditions of *Honey Love* and *Girl Of My Dreams*. Three of the Four Lovers and one of the Royal Teens (of Capitol Records fame) formed the Four Lovers. One popular story had it that the group was fooling around one day in a practice session and came up with *Sherry*. Supposedly they were a nightclub act who didn't sing in any style that approached R&B. They were even supposed to have been embarrassed that Vee Jay released *Sherry*. While this makes a good story, I find it hard to believe in light of the 1956 recordings. Both of these sound very similar to the Four Seasons' style, and Frankie Valli's unique voice is plainly evident on both. The group made several records for Vee Jay and most of them became very popular, including *Big Girls*

Don't Cry, Ain't That A Shame, and *Candy Girl*. Vee Jay began to go downhill when it lost the group to another label and the Four Seasons gradually drifted toward more conventional, middle-of-the-road material.

About two-thirds of the way through October, the Lenox label started. Lenox aided the musical return of Little Esther Phillips, whose *Release Me* was a big hit. The label also showed Arthur Lee Maye, the Medallions, (not the Dootone group), and Sir Joe and the Maidens. Lenox died not long after it began.

On November 24, Volt released number 103, *These Arms Of Mine* by Otis Redding (see 1965 for more on Otis). The record did quite well and it reinforced the decision of Stax-Volt President, Jim Stewart, to venture further into R&B. Stewart was a white man who had dropped out of law school at Memphis State to try his hand at the record business. His early attempts met only with failure but he had the determination to keep going. In 1960, while looking for a place to locate a studio, he happened to settle on an abandoned theatre on McLemore Street. As fate would have it, the theatre was in one of Memphis' black communities, and young black artists began hanging around the studio. In 1961, the Mar Keys sold a half-million copies of an instrumental called *Last Night*. One of the musicians in the Mar Keys was a talented black named Booker T. Jones. While practicing in the studio one day, he came up with a catchy riff that Jim Stewart decided to record. Booker T. picked up three other men who were in the Mar Keys to form the M.G.'s and the catchy riff became *Green Onions*. Other instrumentals had been popular down through the years but *Green Onions* was unquestionably one of the funkiest. The Volt label represented an expan-

sion for Stax and Otis' record was one of the first efforts on the new label. The Stax-Volt combination became the focal point of the raw, down-to-earth Memphis Sound of the Soul Era. It was a sound that became popular enough to rival Berry Gordy's Detroit dynasty. Since 1961, Volt has come up with the Bar-Kays, the Epsilons, and the Mad Lads, while Stax has recorded Rufus *Walking The Dog* Thomas, his daughter Carla, William Bell, Sam and Dave, Eddie Floyd, and Johnny Taylor.

Arthur Alexander's *You Better Move On* on Dot was one of 1962's first releases, and *It's You* by the Hollywood Saxons on Elf was one of the last. In between, Dionne Warwick made *Don't Make Me Over* on Scepter, the Destineers did *Take A Look* for RCA Victor, and Jimmy Ruffin made his first record, a tune on Miracle called *Don't Feel Sorry For Me*.

1963

In mid-January of 1963, Fury released its last record before quietly going out of business. The death of Fury was especially significant because the label spanned almost the entire Rock Era. In terms of total output, it was the most important of Bobby Robinson's labels. At one time or another its lineup included Lewis Lymon and the Teenchords, the Federals, the Hemlocks, the Kodoks, Wilbert Harrison, Jackie and the Starlights, the Vibraharpes, the Channells, the Scarlets, Hal Paige and the Whalers, Lee Dorsey, and Gladys Knight and the Pips. How about that for talent!

Early in March, *Billboard* reported that Jerry Butler had wrecked his fourth Cadillac in ten months. Vee Jay Record Company executives were reportedly consider-

ing buying a pair of roller skates for their star. On a more serious note, Jerry had already become a very important artist since leaving the Impressions a couple of years earlier. His renditions of *Moon River* and *Make It Easy On Yourself* enjoyed a considerable amount of popularity.

Success 101 was released on April 27; the company was based in the rather unlikely town of Des Moines, Iowa. The label folded after about twelve releases but those dozen or so records were among the better sides of the Rock Era's latter days. Included among Success' better waxings are *I Don't Want Everything* by Jimmy McHugh, *My Need* by the Extensions, *Dear Diary* by the Blendtones and the Martinels' *Baby Think It Over*.

On June 8, Tamla released number 54080, a tune by a twelve year-old blind boy from Saginaw, Michigan who called himself Stevie Wonder. The story has it that Stevie was discovered by Ronnie White of the Miracles when Ron's younger brother was a playmate of Stevie. *Fingertips* was not Stevie's first release but it certainly won him wider public acclaim than his previous three records combined. The Motown people immediately began comparing Stevie to Ray Charles. Obviously they were both blind but I think the comparison ended there. Since 1963, Stevie has come into his own with hits like *A Place In The Sun*, *Uptight (Everything Is All Right)*, *Yester Me, Yester You, Yesterday*, *Blowin In The Wind*, and *My Cherie Amour*. Because he is still young, Stevie probably will continue to have records in the top one hundred for a long time to come.

About June 22, George Goldner announced that he was leaving the Roulette organization. Goldner had owned Rama, Gone, and End, but in 1962, he sold Gone

and End to Roulette, remaining as a producer. When Goldner left Roulette this became the death knell for End and Gone. Roulette elected to let both of them go inactive. Since then Roulette has done what several other big record companies have done; they have reissued some of their earlier material on a hit series. Many of the Rama-Gone-End releases are included in Roulette's hit series.

Early in July, Okeh released a trend-setting piece of wax by Major Lance entitled *The Monkey Time*. It became a smash hit and the monkey became one of the most widely-imitated dances since the twist. As for Major Lance himself, his background was somewhat similar to that of Jackie Wilson. Lance had boxed in his hometown of Chicago, although he had never been a Golden Gloves champion like Wilson. He got into singing through a gospel group called the Five Harmonaires. Major Lance has since had several minor hits including one as recently as 1970 called *Follow The Leader*.

Late in August, Ewart Abner left Vee Jay Records. Vee Jay's Abner label, named for Ewart, had indeed been an important one. He took some of Vee Jay's artists with him (notably Gene Chandler and Dee Clark) and within a couple of weeks released a record on his brand new Constellation label. Constellation put out some fifty or sixty different sides before folding.

I'm not sure that there is any connection, but on October 5, Vee Jay became one of the first record companies to jump into oldies feet first by announcing the Oldies 45 line. Most of the records issued were old hits originally made for Vee Jay but a distribution agreement with Ace Records of Jackson, Mississippi made many additional numbers available. Unfortunately, Vee

Jay chose to release some of Ace's white, pop-rock material and largely ignore some of the label's better waxings.

In mid-October the Fame label started. It only managed to hang on for a couple of years but it did come up with two good soul artists in Jimmy Hughes and Clarence Carter. Both Clarence and Jimmy later enjoyed some success for Atlantic.

Smooth-singing Lenny Welch took the nation by storm in the late fall of 1963 with his rendition of *Since I Fell For You*. Lenny sounded a little bit like the great Rudy West of the Five Keys, leading me to speculate that he would have sounded very good if backed with a good male group. Lenny made a couple of other nice records for Cadence: *I Need Someone* and *Congratulations Baby*.

Another fine label died late in 1963. Early in November, Everlast issued *Deserie* by the Charts (number 5026) and probably folded shortly thereafter. In addition to the Charts, Everlast had turned out respectable waxings by the Kings and the Queens, the Logics, the Extremes, and Les "Wiggle Wobble" Cooper.

Marshall Sehorn began the Sea Horn label in December and a few days before Christmas, former Fury star, Wilbert Harrison cut *Near To You*. It was a rather strange, haunting tune that became Harrison's first big hit since *Kansas City*. This was Sea Horn's one and only "biggie" and the label soon folded.

Some of the better tunes from the year include: *Every Beat Of My Heart* by Gladys Knight and the Pips on Vee Jay, *Together* by the Dreamlovers on Swan; and *Shake A Tail Feather* by the Five Dutones on One-Der-Ful.

And so it came about that the Rock And Roll Era slowly passed on. But in a larger sense, rock is still alive and very conspicuous in the hard acid rock that has recently fought its way up from the underground. It still occasionally surfaces amidst the soul style that has become so common in more recent years. Some of the old heroes like Little Anthony and the Imperials, Little Richard, and Jackie Wilson are still singing. The kids who grew up on the music are now old enough to vote out the congressman who once declared that "rock and roll is just as bad for kids as dope."

Rock 'N Roll Era— Some Representative Artists

Five Royales

The story of the Five Royales actually began in the tobacco country around Winston-Salem many years before they ever got into a recording studio. Early in 1942, Otto Jeffries returned home from a prolonged hospital stay. His friend, Lowman Pauling, paid him a visit and persuaded him to join his newly-formed gospel group, The Royal Sons. The Royal Sons Quintet, as they became known, also featured William Samuels, Curtis Pauling, and Clarence Pauling. Johnny Moore replaced Clarence about 1943. They had already built a reputation through their appearances at local Negro churches and they soon began singing in Greensboro, Charlotte, Raleigh, and many of the smaller towns throughout the Carolina foothills. Obediah Carter and Johnny Tanner replaced Samuels and Curtis Pauling about 1950. Contrary to popular opinion, Tanner, not Lowman Pauling, became the lead voice on all of the group's recordings.

At any rate, an admirer named Robert Woodward wrote to Apollo Records, praising the quintet and suggesting that the company give them a try. A tape was sent to Apollo and the group was soon on its way to New York for its first recording session. This must have been about April, 1952. Otto Jeffries recalled that they signed a contract, a clause of which stated that they would change their style at the request of the company. They did *Bedside Of A Neighbor* and *Journey's End* which were soon released on the Apollo Gospel Series (number

253). About three months later they returned to New York for a second session. One of the "wheels" at Apollo wanted them to try an R&B tune. Pauling had written *You Know I Know* and *Courage To Love*. These two sides were released in September, 1952, by Apollo Records. At the same session they also cut *Come Over Here* and *Let Nothing Separate Me* as the Royal Sons Quintet. *You Know I Know* became a mild success, and that spelled the end of their gospel singing days. *Baby Don't Do It* sold so well that Otto Jeffries told me it might have sold a million copies with any kind of exposure on top forty stations. The Five Royales, as they became known, went on several tours and were soon playing at theaters and nightclubs all over the land. While on one of these tours in 1954, it was decided that Jeffries would act as manager and retire from stage duties in favor of Johnny Tanner's younger brother Eugene. Jeffries, however, continued to sing with the group when they recorded. About April, 1954, the group split from Apollo. Obediah Carter told me that they had been treated fairly by the Apollo people but that Carl Le Bow felt they could do even better with King. Carl was with the group for many years as a close friend and personal advisor; he even helped out with some of the songwriting. The Five Royales followed Carl's lead and went with King. As a result of this move, The Royals, who had been with King's Federal subsidiary for two years, changed their name to the Midnighters.

The Five Royales continued to turn out good records during the Rock And Roll Era. They became better known to white audiences as radio stations became less reluctant to play tunes with soulful content. The group played major theaters and some of America's leading

colleges and universities. They would have become more famous had they not been "covered" on *Dedicated To The One I Love*, a tune written by Lowman Pauling and King arranger Ralph Bass. *Think* was later popularized by James Brown, although their version also sold many copies.

It was a disagreement with James Brown that contributed to the group's decision to break with King in the early sixties. When this occurred they went with Home-of-the-Blues, a small company in Memphis that could ill afford to properly promote the records of their newly-acquired stars. As a result, Home-of-the-Blues made some sort of arrangement with a couple of bigger, more established companies. This accounts for the fact that a few of the Five Royales recordings appeared on Vee Jay and ABC Paramount. Carter and Jeffries both insisted that the group had never recorded directly for either but that Vee Jay and ABC distributed some of the Home-of-the-Blues sides. Several of these are resings or re-workings of older material.

Not long after the Home-of-the-Blues sides, the group broke up, and most of the members went back to Winston-Salem. The group had been intact for about thirteen years, and some of its members had been together for about twenty-one years. Jeffries attributed their longevity to the understanding that the men had for each other. Although he didn't say so, I feel that this understanding and maturity was reflected in the music they made. Their unique style was enhanced by the maturity that drove them to perfect the tunes they recorded.

Today they hear Sam and Dave doing one of the Five Royales' lesser-known tunes and they wonder; they hear *Dedicated To The One I Love* being revived and they

wonder. James Brown sings *Think* and they wonder some more. It is easy for them to look back and see how they have contributed to the music they love, to recall the extent to which they influenced the Rock And Roll Era in particular and R&B in general. They wonder if they shouldn't get together and try again.

As this was written Jeffries, Carter, Pauling and Moore were in the process of negotiating with several record companies concerning the return of the Five Royales. Several problems must be ironed out and nothing definite has yet been accomplished, but Jeffries thinks that these obstacles will be overcome. One of these problems is the replacement of Johnny Tanner, who is no longer interested in a recording career.

Five Royales Discography

Apollo

- 441 You Know I Know—Courage To Love (9-52)
- 443 Baby, Don't Do It—Take All Of Me (12-52)
- 446 Crazy, Crazy, Crazy—Help Me Somebody (4-53)
- 448 Too Much Loving—Laundromat Blues (8-53)
- 449 I Want To Thank You—All Righty (10-53)
- 452 Good Things—I Do (1-54)
- 454 Cry Some More—I Like It Like That (4-54)
- 458 What's That—Let Me Come Back Home (7-54)
- 467 With All Your Heart—Six O'Clock In The Morning (1-55)

King

- 4740 Behave Yourself—I'm Gonna Run It Down (8-54)
- 4744 Monkey Hips and Rice—Devil With The Rest (10-54)
- 4762 One Mistake—School Girl (12-54)
- 4770 Every Dog Has His Day—You Didn't Learn It At Home (1-55)
- 4785 How I Wonder—Mohawk Squaw (3-55)
- 4806 When I Get Like This—I Need Your Lovin' Baby (6-55)

- 4819 Women About To Make Me Go Crazy—Do Unto You (8-55)
 - 4830 Someone Made You For Me—I Ain't Gettin' Caught (10-55)
 - 4869 When You Walked Through The Door—Right Around The Corner (1-56)
 - 4901 My Wants For Love—I Could Love You (3-56)
 - 4952 Get Something Out Of It—Come On and Save Me (7-56)
 - 4973 Just As I Am—Mine Forevermore (10-56)
 - 5032 Think—I'd Better Make A Move (5-57)
 - 5053 Thirty Second Lover—Tears of Joy (4-57)
 - 5082 Say It—Messin Up (10-57)
 - 5098 Don't Be Ashamed—Dedicated To The One I Love (12-57)
 - 5131 Do The Cha Cha Cherry—The Feeling Is Real (5-58)
 - 5141 Tell The Truth—Double Or Nothing (6-58)
 - 5153 The Slummer The Slum—Don't Let It Be In Vain (10-58)
 - 5162 Your Only Love—The Real Thing (12-58)
 - 5191 I Know Its Hard But It's Fair—Miracle of Love (3-58)
 - 5237 Wonder Where Your Love Has Gone—Tell Me You Care (8-59)
 - 5266 It Hurts Inside—My Sugar Sugar (10-59)
 - 5329 Don't Give No More Than You Can Take—I'm With You (3-60)
 - 5357 Why—Within My Heart (6-60)
 - 5453 Miracle of Love—Dedicated To The One I Love (1-61)
- Home Of The Blues**
- 112 Please Please Please—I Got To Know (10-60)
 - 218 If You Don't Need Me—I'm Gonna Tell Them (2-61)
 - 232 Not Going To Cry—Take Me With You Baby (5-61)
 - 234 They Don't Know—Much In Need (8-61)
 - 257 Goof Ball—Catch That Teardrop (7-62)
- ABC Paramount**
- 10368 I Want It Like That—What's In The Heart (9-62)
- Todd**
- 1088 Baby Don't Do It—There's Somebody Over There (10-36)

Vee Jay

- 412 Much In Need—They Don't Know (10-61)
 441 Help Me Somebody—Talk About My Woman (5-62)

Smash

- 1936 I Like It Like That—Baby Don't Do It (10-64)

Little Richard

Richard Wayne Penniman entered the world on Christmas Day, 1935, born into the kind of poverty that black southerners have known all too well for too long. He was born and raised in Macon, Georgia, as was Otis Redding in more recent years. His family was large, and he had to fend for himself, but in doing so, he learned the independence that would enable him to stand firmly on his convictions as an adult. Little is generally known about Richard's childhood, but it is reported that his father was at one time a printer and that Richard sometimes helped him in the print shop. One thing is certain: The Pennimans were avid believers in the old-time gospel brand religion. Richard was inspired by this sort of atmosphere, and it supplied him with a set of values that he has kept all his life. More important for the purpose at hand, it gave him the church background from which his singing style evolved. In fact, it may be argued that his style never really left the church, just the lyrical contents of his songs. In any event, he learned to develop his voice in church and, in 1950, at the ripe old age of fourteen, he was already a soloist in his church's choir. At the age of sixteen he journeyed to Atlanta to enter an amateur talent contest sponsored by a theater and won first place. This venture was probably responsible for the start of his recording career, because his first record (he was known even then as Little Richard because of his size) appeared on RCA Victor in December, 1951. Three

other releases appeared periodically on the same label with the last one issued in November, 1952. Little is known about these recordings; they certainly sold poorly and because of this, today they are extremely rare. They aren't listed in the discography because they are of no more than historical significance, but, ironically, one was entitled *Get Rich Quick*.

Little Richard's next efforts were backed by a group called the Tempo Toppers. This group consisted of Jimmy Swan, Bobby Brooks, Barry Gilmore, and Raymond Taylor. Taylor was an organist, and it is believed that Gilmore also played an instrument. Don Robey signed the group to his Peacock label, and the boys did their first session on February 25, 1953. Robey must not have been very impressed because he didn't put their recording of *Fool At The Wheel* onto the market until about May 30. In the meantime, the group had signed with the Buffalo Booking Agency (Buffalo Booking also handled personal appearances for Johnny Ace) to do some shows. *Fool At The Wheel* featured Little Richard, and while the vocal work was decent enough, the Little Richard that was yet-to-be was not yet. The tune was fast-paced, as was its followup, and this may have been significant in terms of the fantastically wild material that later helped him to become a star. Also, like the record that followed it, it came nowhere near approaching the big hit status.

Little is known about the last days of the Tempo Toppers, but it is likely that they decided to call it quits when their two Peacock records failed to make it. Richard went on trying to produce commercially acceptable sides with Johnny Otis' Orchestra lending support. Two more records came from this which again resulted

in failure. The late release dates of these sides can be attributed to the fact that Don Robey was trying to capitalize on Richard's success on Specialty. Had Richard never become a big star on another label, it is likely that these sides would still be in the "can."

While still with Peacock, Richard organized a band called the Upsetters to accompany him on tour. This outfit's personnel has undergone many changes through the years but some of the members were: Grady Gaines, Oliver Bush, Nathaniel Douglas, Ossie Robinson, Emile Bussell, Wilbur Smith, Clifford Burks, Larry Lennear, Milt Hopkins, and Chico Booth. It is quite likely that many of these musicians were "regulars" on Peacock because they also backed Big Walter and Clarence "Gate-mouth" Brown, two of Peacock's blues shouters.

Richard was on tour with the Upsetters when he began sending audition tapes to Specialty Records for arranger "Bumps" Blackwell. Richard called every few days until he finally aroused the curiosity of Blackwell and owner Art Rupe. They began to pay more attention to his tapes and finally expressed an interest in him. They found out he was still under contract to Peacock, so they loaned him enough to buy up the contract (for only about six hundred dollars), and Little Richard signed with Specialty. This must have been about mid-1955. "Bumps" Blackwell went to New Orleans to record him, and *Tutti Frutti* came out of that first session. Richard had made up the song, and, when he played it, Blackwell liked it. The lyrics, though, were so suggestive that they were greatly modified right before the recording session. For the first time in a Little Richard recording session, he belted out his songs in the Southern gospel-flavored style he had known as a boy. The result was

that Little Richard became a household word in 1956 and 1957. His fame was enhanced by the Jayne Mansfield movie "The Girl Can't Help It," in which he sang the title song, and numerous appearances with the pied piper of rock and roll, Alan Freed. A later session produced a song which was supposed to have been named *The Thing*, as a title song for another movie. The movie deal fell through so the song was released under the title of *Long Tall Sally*. Another big hit, *Keep A Knockin'*, was pieced together from an audition tape Richard mailed to the company while on tour.

At the same time that Richard was enjoying his greatest success, he felt troubled. Joe Lutch, a former Specialty bluesman-turned-minister continued to remind Richard of his religious faith, and Richard's conscience was bothering him. He became increasingly reluctant to record, although he continued to tour. His worldly interests had extended to the perfume business by July of 1957, and it is conceivable that this added weight to his troubled conscience. Late in September of that year he went to Australia to do a series of shows. A few weeks later he announced that he was through with show business, packed his things and left, leaving the "Aussies" somewhat bewildered and dismayed. Shortly after his return to the United States, he demonstrated the sincerity of his convictions by enrolling at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. Here he received a B.A. in theology, with a minor in business administration and psychology, while Specialty continued to release his material. The Upsetters, in the meantime, backed Dee Clark's hit, *Hey Little Girl*. Richard was probably under considerable pressure to record again, and, in fact, he did so, but these efforts were primarily gospel. He was so

highly regarded that his gospel discs appeared on the prestigious Mercury, End and Coral labels, among others. The sides were done in New York in the summer of 1959, and it is likely that he fitted all his gospel sessions into school vacation time. With full recognition of the legitimacy and beauty of gospel records, they have been omitted from the discography because they are of lesser interest to most readers.

Not all of the Little Richard records of that period were gospel however. He got together with the Upsetters to record Fats Domino's *Yes It's Me (And I'm In Love Again)*, probably during Christmas vacation, 1959. The other two records listed on H.B. Barnum's Little Star label were most likely done at the same session, with Richard playing the piano on the first of these and singing on the other two. His name didn't appear on these because he was under contract to another company at the time. The Mystic Valley record is identical to Little Star 123, except that an audience was dubbed in. Richard himself was unaware of the existence of this record until recently, and it may be an illegal "bootleg" record.

Little Richard did at least two records for Atlantic in 1963, and in April, 1964, went back to Los Angeles to cut *Bama Lama Bama Loo* for Specialty. Sounding very much like the artist on the early Specialty sides that made him famous, he brought joy to the hearts of old rock fans, but the record hardly got off the ground. Not long after that he made some records for Vee Jay and Okeh at a slower tempo, but these also did poorly.

More recently Richard has rejoined former manager "Bumps" Blackwell, and there has been much talk of a come back. He has been touring with some success, but

most of his appeal apparently lies with a segment of the population that doesn't buy as many 45 rpm singles as it did thirteen years ago. Whether or not his 1957 type of rock music will impress today's teenagers is still an open question. But regardless, the memory of the dynamic Little Richard, one of the Rock And Roll Era's greatest stars, will live in the hearts and minds of millions...forever.

Little Richard Discography

Peacock

- 1616 (Tempo Toppers) Fool At The Wheel—Ain't That Good News (5-53)
- 1628 (Tempo Toppers) Always—Red Rice, Beans, And Turnip Greens (3-54)
- 1658 Little Richard's Boogie—Directly From My Heart (4-56)
- 1673 Maybe I'm Right—I Love My Baby (5-57)

Specialty

- 561 Tutti-Frutti—I'm Just A Lonely Guy (10-55)
- 572 Long Tall Sally—Slippin' and Slidin' (3-56)
- 579 Rip It Up—Ready Teddy (6-56)
- 584 She's Got It—Heeby Jeebies (10-56)
- 591 The Girl Can't Help It—All Around The World (12-56)
- 598 Lucille—Send Me Some Loving (2-57)
- 606 Jenny Jenny—Miss Ann (6-57)
- 611 Keep a Knockin—Can't Believe You Wanna Leave (8-57)
- 624 Good Golly Miss Molly—Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey (2-58)
- 633 Ooh My Soul—True Fine Mama (5-58)
- 645 Baby Face—I'll Never Let You Go (9-58)
- 652 She Knows How To Rock—Early One Morning (11-58)
- 660 Wonderin'—By The Light Of The Silvery Moon (3-59)
- 664 Kansas City—Lonesome and Blue (4-59)
- 670 Shake A Hand—All Night Long (6-59)
- 680 Maybe I'm Right—Whole Lot Of Shakin' Goin On (12-59)
- 681 I Got It—Baby (12-59)

- 686 Directly From My Heart—The Most I Can Offer (4-60)
 692 Bama Lama Bama Loo—Annie Is Back (5-64)
 697 Bama Lama Bama Loo—Annie Is Back (4-70)
 699 Poor Boy Paul—Wonderin' (6-70)

Little Star

- 118 Tater Machine—Let's Get A Thing Going (7-62)
 123 Every Night About This Time—Yes It's Me (12-62)
 128 Valley of Tears—Freedom Ride (7-63)

Mystic Valley

- 551 Yes It's Me—Every Night About This Time (63?)

Atlantic

- 2181 Hole In The Wall—Crying In The Chapel (3-63)
 2192 It Is No Secret—Travelin' Shoes (6-63)

Oldies 45

- 192 Blueberry Hill—Lawdy Miss Clawdy (64?)

Vee Jay

- 612 Whole Lot Of Shakin' Goin' On—Goodnight Irene (8-64)
 652 Cross Over—It Ain't Whatcha Do (1-65)
 665 Without Love—Dance What You Wanta (3-65)
 698 I Dont Know What You Got But It's Got Me—Part II (10-65)

Okeh

- 7251 Poor Dog—Well (6-66)
 7262 I Need Love—The Commandments of Love (11-66)
 7271 I Don't Want To Discuss It—Hurry Sundown (2-67)
 7278 Don't Deceive Me—Never Gonna Let You Go (4-67)
 7268 A Little Bit Of Something (7-67)
 7325 Whole Lot Of Shakin' Goin' On—Lucille (3-69)

Modern

- 1018 Holy Mackerel—Baby Don't You Want A Man Like Me (1-66)
 1019 Do You Feel It—Part II (1-66)
 1022 I'm Back—Directly From My Heart (4-66)
 1030 Bring It Back Home To Me—Slippin' And Slidin' (11-66)
 1043 Baby What You Want Me To Do—Part II (11-67)

Brunswick

- 55362 She's Together—Try Some Of Mine (2-68)

- 55377 Stingy Jenny—Baby Don't You Tear My Clothes (5-68)

- 55386 Can I Count On You—Soul Train (8-68)

Reprise

- 0907 Dew Drop Inn—Freedom Blues (4-70)
 0942 Greenwood, Mississippi—I Saw Her Standing There (9-70)

The Penguins

The Cool Cool Penguins. That was the title on one of their albums, and a fitting compliment it was. The Penguins were one of the most widely known groups of the Rock And Roll Era. When they were in their heyday, they were lauded constantly from all quarters. Today, they are nearly forgotten except for those of us who are old enough to remember fondly the music of the fifties. But during the late fifties their accomplishments included appearances with some of the top names in show business: people like Count Basie, Dinah Washington, Duke Ellington, and Alan Freed, not to mention most of the R&B stars of the day. They helped raise money for several charities, and their citations included the Music Operators Association Award, Billboard and Cashbox awards, and the coveted Pittsburgh Courier Award. Yet the plight of the black record artist in the fifties was such that the group, while on tour, often wound up in the middle of nowhere in a beatup old car with very little money. Obviously, this was a far cry from the slick, well-heeled R&B artists of today, who dress in natty attire and fly from one performance to another. As one star who had been a part of the scene for a long time told me: "Today's R&B singer is a better businessman, but he can't sing as well as his older counterpart." He must have said that with the Penguins in mind.

At this point I would like to take you back in time to early 1954. The scene was Los Angeles. "Dootsie" Williams, black owner of the Dootone Record Company, had already released some material in the jazz, blues, and pop vein, and he was looking forward to getting into the R&B vocal group "thing." Rhythm and blues, as I have defined it, was just beginning to command some attention in the music world. "Dootsie's" problem was that he didn't have a group. At the same time, in the same city, a clique was evolving which was soon to produce some of the greatest rhythm and blues artists that ever lived. This informal fraternity consisted of members of the Medallions, Penguins, Meadowlarks, Turks, Flairs, and probably some lesser-known groups. Jesse Belvin, who later became famous with *Goodnight My Love*, was the leader. Most of the fellows were just out of high school or about to graduate. Jesse had recently written a song called *Earth Angel* which the Penguins picked up and began practicing. Dootsie found the Penguins (then known as the Flywheels) through a contact in the record-pressing business who happened to be the uncle of Cleveland Duncan, lead singer of the group. The other original members were: Curtis Williams, Dexter Tisby; and Bruce Tate, who suffered a bad accident and was thus forced into early retirement. "Dootsie" went to a practice session in March where he met the group and listened to them rehearse. Years later he recalled that he thought both the group and the song needed some work. Nonetheless, *No, There Ain't No News Today*, a jump tune, was issued about May, 1954. It was intended as a demonstration disc and the flip side even featured another artist, but it did sell a few copies. In the meantime, Cornell Gunter, who was the

lead singer of the Flairs, rehearsed the group, and Gaynell Hodge, who wrote and recorded with several West Coast groups, revised parts of *Earth Angel*. When "Dootsie" arranged for a test pressing to be aired, it brought a tremendous response, and he rushed it onto the market. It sold about two million copies. That figure becomes even more impressive when you realize that it was released in 1954, when black artists had only limited opportunities to reach white record buyers. Couple this with the fact that it was covered several times by white artists, the fact that it is still selling a few copies many years later, and you begin to realize its importance.

The original Penguins made two more very good records for Dootone; they had not even been released when Curtis Williams, who acted as the spokesman for the group, informed "Dootsie" that they were breaking contract to go with Mercury. A courtroom battle between Dootone and Mercury resulted in the big, white-owned company getting control of the group, and unbelievable as it may seem, almost winning the rights to the song's royalties.

So the Penguins went to Mercury under the management of Buck Ram (who also managed the Platters) and recorded some very good and some very mediocre sides for that company. The best ones were *Devil That I See*, *She's Gone, Gone*, *A Christmas Prayer*, *Be Mine Or Be A Fool*, and *My Troubles Are Not At An End*. The latter title was strangely prophetic inasmuch as the Penguins wound up back in California after an extended tour. They were badly in debt and Curtis was soon forced to leave the group due to complications arising from a non-support suit. Cleve underwent an operation for tonsillitis, but, fortunately it didn't affect his ability to sing.

"Dootsie" paid off the debts in return for the release of claim to further royalties on *Earth Angel*, and the Penguins rejoined Dootone, now shortened to Dooto. Cleve and Dexter stayed on while Teddy Harper and Randolph Jones were the new substitutes. Although half of the original group was gone, the Penguins sounded much the same because it was the distinctive voice of Cleve Duncan that readily identified the group. On the other hand, their new material wasn't as strong, and they never had another hit record for "Dootsie." Cleve sang *To Keep Our Love* with a group called the Radiants, who may have been the Penguins in disguise, but it too didn't sell.

Late in 1958, when it became evident that "Dootsie" was going to deemphasize rhythm and blues (see 1959), the Penguins left Dooto again. They have never returned. A brief notice in the January 5, 1959 issue of *Billboard* said that the Penguins were signed by Hanover and that a new release would be forthcoming. As far as I know, the Hanover label never issued anything by the group. If they did it is certainly rare and generally unknown.

The "oldies" craze that originated about 1960 brought a few of their old hits out of moth balls, but *Earth Angel* was far more popular than the others. In 1963 a Penguins group led by Cleve Duncan returned to wax with *Memories of El Monte*, a tune in which Cleve reminisced about a dance hall called El Monte and did snatches of old R&B tunes. There may have been more personnel changes about this time, but no one knows for sure. I believe that the group broke up in 1963 or 1964. In 1969 a group called the Penguins appeared at an "oldies" concert in New York. They sang *Earth Angel* and it was immediately obvious that Cleve Duncan was

still singing lead. However, there was a girl in the group and, quite possibly, different male personnel in support of Cleve. I've been keeping an eye open for any new records but it's been over a year now and I don't think the New York appearance was anything more than an attempt to relive some of the golden memories of the past.

Penguins Discography

Dootone

- 345 No There Ain't No News Today (5-54)
- 348 Earth Angel—Hey Senorita (6-54)
- 353 Love Will Make Your Mind Go Wild—Ookey Ook (9-54)
- 362 Baby Let's Make Love—Kiss A Fool Goodbye (4-55)

Mercury

- 70610 Be Mine Or Be A Fool—Don't Do It (4-55)
- 70654 Walkin' Down Broadway—It Only Happens With You (7-55)
- 70703 Devil That I See—Promises Promises Promises (10-55)
- 70762 A Christmas Prayer—Jingle Jangle (12-55)
- 70799 She's Gone, Gone—My Troubles Are Not At An End (1-56)
- 70943 Earth Angel—Ice (8-56)
- 71033 Will You Be Mine—Cool Baby Cool (1-57)

Wing

- 90076 Dealer Of Dreams—Peace of Mind (5-56)

Atlantic

- 1132 Pledge Of Love—I Knew I'd Fall In Love (4-57)

Dooto

- 428 Be My Lovin Baby—I Need You (12-57)
- 432 Sweet Love—Let Me Make Up Your Mind (1-58)
- 435 Do Not Pretend—If You're Mine (3-58)
- 451 To Keep Our Love—My Heart (Cleve and the Radiants) (8-59)
- 456 Mister Junkman—You're An Angel (EP) (8-60)

Sun State

- 001 Believe Me—Pony Rock (62?)

Original Sound

- 27 Memories of El Monte—Be Mine (4-63)
 54 Big Bobo's Party Train—Heavenly Angel (64?)

Rainbows

Most of the groups or artists generally considered to be among the all-time greats were those who actively recorded and performed for many years. Consider James Brown, on the scene since 1956; witness the Impressions, a winner since 1958; or how about the Five Keys and their thirteen year career? The Rainbows were together only about two years. Many groups featured lead singers who became famous, like Harvey, of the Moonglows, "Smokey" Robinson of the Miracles, or "Pookie" Hudson of the Spaniels. The Rainbows had John Berry singing lead (also Sonny Spencer), and Chester Simmons, bass. Many of the classic groups turned out hit after hit after hit. The Rainbows made only three records, although various members of the group have appeared on many recordings. Why feature such a group then? Why bother to single them out for attention while choosing to ignore some artists with more fame? The answer lies in the names of the three members of this nearly forgotten group. Are you ready for this? The other three Rainbows were Don Covay, Billy Stewart, and Marvin Gaye. The Dominoes produced two big stars in Clyde McPhatter and Jackie Wilson. The Flairs had Richard Berry, Cornell Gunter, and Obie "Young" Jessie, but none of them obtained the stature of a Marvin Gaye, even by mid-fifties standards.

The story of the Rainbows began in Washington, D.C. Most of the fellows grew up in the neighborhood around Fourth and Emerson Streets, Northwest, but John Berry was from the vicinity of Fourteenth and U Streets, also

in Northwest D.C. Billy Stewart's mother gave piano lessons and Billy soon showed musical inclination of his own. He sang in churches as a youngster. John, Don, and Chester also came up through the church. Before they took the name Rainbows, some members of the group had appeared locally on gospel programs, and reportedly appeared once or twice on programs which featured the famous Soul Stirrers. It is quite likely that Marvin also sang in church.

The Rainbows were probably organized by Don Covay and John Berry. In any event they were instrumental in keeping the group together, and there were good reasons for this. First of all, both were older than the other fellows. In 1955 they were both in their early twenties, and both were married men with children. That's enough to make any man work to get ahead. Billy Stewart was only seventeen, and the other members were in their late teens also. None of them were married. Secondly, Covay was, and still is, a prolific songwriter. It is only natural for a group to turn to its songwriter for direction inasmuch as he is bound to be more familiar with the material than the others.

Fifteen years have gone by since the Rainbows approached Jay Perry and asked him to be their manager. He remembered Stewart as "shy" and "serious," while Chester was the group's clown. He didn't see anything outstanding about Marvin Gaye and recalled that he was "a nice kid, but just a member of the group." He did remember that Marvin seemed to learn his part very quickly. The group liked to "work songs out" in the recording studio, but Jay insisted that they at least have some idea what they were going to do when they started a session. He would call Don, and Don would see that the group

got together regularly for practice. Perry got his start in broadcasting near his hometown of Farrell, Pennsylvania, a town not far removed from New Castle, where Alan Freed made his debut. While in the army he became an R&B disc jockey, and when his hitch was up, he went to WEAM in Washington. His job was to fill a Saturday evening time slot, so Perry chose to become Washington's first white R&B disc jockey in an attempt to attract a few black listeners. Perry did appeal to many blacks, but the big surprise was the overwhelming response of white teenagers. Perry, like Freed in both Cleveland and New York, had stumbled across a vast, untapped market that was eager to hear artists who employed an R&B style, regardless of the color of the artist's skin.

Early in 1955, Perry took the Rainbows to record several sides for Bobby Robinson's Red Robin label. Perry recalled that there were about six of these, including one called *The Bug*, and another called *Jelly Bean*. Still another one, a curiosity written by Perry and "Whitey" Mitchell, was called *Baraboo*, which was about a "dry" town in Wisconsin. None of these were ever released. *Mary Lee* was issued, of course, and when Perry began playing the record, teenagers created a terrific demand for it. Red Robin was about to fold, and Perry had trouble finding Robinson, so the record was promptly reissued on Pilgrim. Soon after *Mary Lee*, Billy Stewart left to record *Billy's Blues* for Chess. Sonny Spencer took the lead, and John Berry moved over to second lead. *Shirley* was a deliberate attempt to sound like their first record. *They Say* was a dub which Perry didn't even intend to release, but at the insistence of Don Covay and the willingness of Rama the record was issued. It flopped nationally, although it sold reasonably well in the Washington area.

In the meantime, the Rainbows gained valuable experience doing one-nighters along the East Coast, brief engagements at places like the Apollo, and appearances on a couple of Alan Freed's rock shows. They admired the Cadillacs, Midnighters, and Turbans, and often paid tribute to them by singing *Work With Me Annie* and *I'll Always Watch Over You*.

Early in 1957, Don Covay decided that the world needed another Little Richard. He wrote a couple of songs and convinced Atlantic that he should be given a chance. *Bip Bop Bip* was cut at the U.S. Recording Studio in Washington using Little Richard's band. John and Chester provided a vocal background. In the meantime, John Berry also had plans of becoming a soloist. In fact, he soloed at a few Rainbows performances as part of the program but a lukewarm reaction on the part of the audience eventually discouraged these efforts. John began to lose interest completely, and with Don trying to make it on his own, the group was destined to break up. Still another factor that led to a parting of the ways was Billy Stewart's desire to make it on his own. Billy was still on good terms with the group when he left, so when he needed some vocal support for a record on the Okeh label, he called on some members of the Rainbows. The Okeh group included Marvin Gaye, and probably Chester Simmons, as well as Bobby Hawkins, Nolan Ellison, and Reese Palmer. About September, 1957, the group supported Billy's *Baby, You're My Only Love* and also recorded *Wyatt Earp* as the Marquees. After Nolan Ellison left, Harvey Fuqua got them to join him as the Moonglows. With Harvey singing lead they made at least two records before the group broke up in 1960.

Sonny Spencer made a record for Memo in the late fifties that went nowhere. Today Chester Simmons is in the record promotion business. Billy Stewart died January 17, 1970, when his car plunged from Interstate 95 into the Neuse River in North Carolina. He will always be remembered for his "motor boat-mouth" style on *Summertime* and several other fine sides that made him one of Chess' great stars of the sixties. The discography includes only some of his better-known records. Don Covay became an important songwriter as well as a well-known singer for Atlantic. Among the many tunes he has written is *Chain of Fools*, a million seller recorded by Aretha Franklin. Marvin Gaye has reached super-star status with the Motown people, his popularity of such magnitude that he helped popularize Tammi Terrell and Kim Weston, two girls who accompanied him on some of his big sellers. The listing for Don and Marvin is also only partially complete.

I have recently discovered a few dubs of unreleased material done by the Rainbows shortly after their Red Robin recording. One of these is an interesting ballad entitled *Love Me*. None of these appear in the discography.

Rainbows Discography

Red Robin

134 Mary Lee—Evening (6-55)

Pilgrim

703 Mary Lee—Evening (reissue) (2-56)

711 Shirley—Stay (6-56)

Argyle

Shirley—Stay (reissue) (62?)

Rama

209 They Say—Minnie (1-57)

Fire

1012 Mary Lee—Evening (reissue) (3-60)

Billy Stewart

Okeh

7095 Baby, You're My Only Love—Billy's Heartache (with Marquees) (10-57)

Chess

1820 Reap What You Sow—Fat Boy (1-62)

1922 I Do Love You—Keep Lovin' (2-65)

1932 Sitting In The Park—Once Again (6-65)

1948 Mountain Of Love—Because I Love You (12-65)

1966 Summertime—A Love To Love (7-66)

2002 Cross My Heart—Why (Do I Love You So) (10-67)

2063 I'm In Love Oh Yes I Am—Crazy Bout You Baby (12-68)

Don Covay

Atlantic

1147 Bip Bop Bip—Paper Dollar (as Pretty Boy) (7-57)

2301 See Saw (11-65)

2332 Sookie Sookie—Watching The Late, Late Show (3-66)

2725 Everything I Do Goin' Be Funky (5-70)

Rosemart

801 Mercy Mercy (64?)

Marvin Gaye

Tamla

54068 Stubborn Kind of Fellow—It Hurts Me Too (8-62)

54075 Hitch Hike—hello There Angel (12-62)

54117 Pretty Little Baby—Now That You've Won Me (5-65)

54141* It Takes Two—It's Got To Be A Miracle (12-66)

54149* Ain't No Mountain High Enough—Give A Little Love (5-67)

54153 Your Unchanging Love—I'll Take Care Of You (6-67)

54156* Your Precious Love—Hold Me Oh My Darling (9-67)

54176 I Heard It Through The Grapevine—You're What's Happening (11-68)

54181 Too Busy Thinking About My Baby—Wherever I Lay My Hat (4-69)

Motown

1057 Once Upon A Time—What's The Matter With You
Baby (4-64)

*recorded as a duet

Soul Era Highlights

Soul music, baby! Can you dig it? If you can, you're not necessarily a member of a minority group. Millions of people of all races everywhere have been diggin' it since about 1964. Its sphere of influence has not been limited to the North American Continent either. There are many soul music fans in England, France, and other western European nations.

The Soul Era was a rebirth, a revitalization of a music that had grown sterile as a result of too many whites exerting their influence to make the music pretty. In being made pretty, it lost some of its feeling, and it is feeling that is probably the most important element in rhythm and blues music. The stagnant condition that grew out of the large number of songs with moon-in-June lyrics was worsened by the addition of strings and other instruments. When the Drifters first made extensive use of strings the effect was novel. When other companies tried to do this, however, it frequently became a coverup for poor vocalization or a mask for whatever feeling was being expressed by the vocalists. As trend-setting artists like Wilson Pickett, James Brown, the Impressions, and Ray Charles rejected this approach in favor of greater emotional expression, they began a trend that caught up most of the major and minor black record artists. Unfortunately, there seems to have been a corresponding loss of interest in harmony. While I'm not willing to conclude that today's rhythm and blues artists can't carry a tune, it does seem as though the old-timers

were more concerned with harmonization. On the other hand, the contemporary artists seem to be more concerned with lyrics that deal with social issues.

There are at least two good reasons why you can rightfully be more skeptical of some of my interpretations of Soul Era events than of similar interpretations of events occurring in the other two eras. For one thing, as any historian will tell you, it often takes a considerable passage of time before we can be sure of the long-term effects of some actions. We may be too close to the Soul Era to permit us the luxury of making some interpretative statements about it with much certainty. For example, if in 1966 we had posed the question, "What effect have Beatle songs had on rhythm and blues?" the answer would have been, "little or none." But since 1967, several prominent rhythm and blues artists have taken a few tunes made famous by the Beatles and sung them in a rhythm and blues style. The other reason for being less sure of myself in this era is that, in some cases, the events themselves are currently happening. Many of the record companies of the soul era are still in business and their artist rosters, policies, and styles might change abruptly soon after this book is published.

1964

Almost as though he knew I had decided to draw the boundary line between the Rock and Soul Eras at 1964, King Curtis made an instrumental called *Soul Serenade* that Capitol released about January 18. Apart from its advantageous timing (as far as my purpose is concerned) the record effectively displayed Curtis Ousley's musical talent and sold quite a few copies. King Curtis and his Kingpins have slowly but steadily acquired a loyal following; today they rank among the finest instrumentalists of the Soul Era.

About January 24, the DCP label was announced, although its initial release was delayed for a couple of months. DCP's main claim to fame is that it helped Little Anthony and the Imperials recapture the spotlight. As you may recall, the group had become very big in '58 and '59 with several hit records, but since then a dry spell discouraged them. *I'm On The Outside Looking In* was their first big one for DCP, and this was followed by *Goin' Out Of My Head* and *Hurt So Bad*. Other DCP artists ran into tough sledding and the label soon folded.

The wheels were turning at Motown; early in February the VIP label was initiated. It never became as important as most of the Gordy-owned labels, and I believe it has been inactive since about 1969. Early in April, Gordy started the Soul label. Its artist repertoire has included Junior Walker and the All Stars, Gladys Knight and the Pips, the Originals, the Fantastic Four, and Jimmy Ruffin. Needless to say, it has been more important than VIP.

Late in February, MGM issued a record by the Solitaires. It was so poor that the titles aren't worth mentioning. This was doubly tragic in light of the beautiful sides the Solitaires made for Old Town over the years. Among the more noteworthy cuts were *Blue Valentine*, *Lonely*, *I Don't Stand a Ghost of a Chance*, and *Walking Along*. The MGM record was the group's last, thus the end of another great rhythm and blues team.

On May 2, the Red Bird label issued its first record. It was called *Chapel of Love* and it was sung by a group of girls called the Dixie Cups. It took little time in becoming a real chartbuster. In the meantime, I would be remiss in not pointing out the management of Red Bird. George Goldner, who had left Roulette almost a year earlier,

was back in business. But that's not all. He had two partners, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller. The great song writing team had left Atlantic to join forces with Goldner. In mid-December, Red Bird's management saw fit to start the Blue Cat label, but a lack of hits caused both labels to fold about 1967.

On July 25, another first for Motown! It was *Baby, I Need Your Lovin* by the Four Tops. With lead singer Levi Stubbs pointing the way, the quartette from Detroit soon rose to great heights of popularity on the strength of hits such as *I Can't Help Myself*, *It's the Same Old Song*, *Reach Out, I'll be There*, and *Standing in the Shadows of Love*. Since about 1967 or 1968, the Tops have given me the impression that the main thrust of their appeal is aimed at a white audience. They have not had any big hits in a while, although they seem able to sell records on a fairly consistent basis.

Late in August Warner Brothers Records announced a decision to start a rhythm and blues subsidiary. The label was named Loma, and Bob Krasnow was named to head it up. Loma Records recorded the Olympics, Ben Aiken, and Linda Jones, but fell far short of becoming another Motown.

On September 12 VeeJay issued an album by Jerry Butler and Betty Everett. The album had several nice cuts, including *Since I Don't Have You*, and *Just Be True*, two records later issued as singles. The pairing of these two fine artists might have been inspired by the success of Marvin Gaye and Mary Wells, who during the summer of '64 had come up with *What's the Matter With You, Baby*. In recent years the practice of pairing two established rhythm and blues stars on an album has become commonplace.

On October 17, it was Don Julian and the Meadow-

larks making a comeback with *The Jerk* (the group had shortened its name to Larks and the recording was on Money 106). Their record sold very well and the dance itself maintained its status as the "in" dance for many months. The Larks made a few other good sides for Money including *Forget Me*, and *Mickey's East Coast Jerk*.

About the same time that *The Jerk* appeared, Federal issued *You Better Know It* by the Expressions. It bombed, but then, so had most of Federal's efforts for about the last four years. I believe this was Federal's last record before going inactive. If not, it was certainly close to being the last.

Early in December Mercury decided to start a rhythm and blues subsidiary, and Blue Rock issued its first records. The label never became the giant that Mercury would have liked, but it did issue one or two platters by the Chi-Lites and the original hit version of *Mustang Sally* by Sir Mack Rice.

A television show called "Shindig" appeared for the first time in 1964. It provided entertainers a chance to sing their hit songs in front of millions. Occasionally some rhythm and blues artists appeared, but generally the singers were whites who were aiming at the white teenage record market. The show lasted about one year; "Hullabaloo," a similar show, lasted a little longer, probably because some artists who appealed to adults were included on the program.

Nineteen sixty-four proved to be a great year for the Drifters. With Ben E. King gone and some other personnel changes in effect, the revamped outfit nonetheless went to dizzying heights with *Under the Boardwalk*, *I've Got Sand in my Shoes*, and *Saturday Night at the Movies*.

Personnel has changed quite often since 1964 and it is difficult to tell who sang on which records. One recent Drifter of special interest is Eugene Pearson, who sang lead for the Rivileers (*A Thousand Stars*) in 1954. Since 1964, the Drifters have not had a hit of major consequence. Atlantic has been increasingly reluctant to issue Drifter records and, as of this writing, I'm not sure that the group is still together. Adding to the confusion is the fact that Bill Pinckney, who was one of Clyde McPhatter's original group, has been touring the Southeast with a group he calls the Original Drifters. This is a misnomer inasmuch as Pinckney is the only original Drifter in the group. Nevertheless, they sing very well. I talked with them for nearly an hour at a bar outside of Auburn, Alabama in 1968. The other men in the group were quite young. All three hailed from Winston-Salem and their names were Calvin Richardson, Clarence Walker, and Ivo Caesar.

Some honorable mentions for '64 include: *You Lied*, by the Electras on Infinity; *Baby, Baby All the Time*, by the Superbs on Dore; *I'm Gonna Thank You*, by the Enchanters on Warner Brothers; and the Radiants' *Voice Your Choice*, one of their earlier efforts for the Chess label.

1965

The Arctic label began in Philadelphia, probably about mid-January. Arctic's first big star was not long in presenting herself to the record-buying public. Like Arctic, Barbara Mason was born in Philadelphia. Her first record was called *Dedicated to You* and on it she was backed by a group from Philadelphia called the Larks. It appeared on Crusader late in 1964, but it wasn't a big seller. When her own composition of *Yes I'm Ready* hit the

market, rhythm and blues fans showed that they were indeed ready for Barbara Mason. A couple of followup records were also well received, but Barbara hasn't had a hit for three or four years. Arctic later came up with the Volcanos, and a good soul group called the Ambassadors, whose efforts haven't met with anywhere near the success I feel they deserve.

About January 23, the Carnival label released a song called *I Wanna Be* by a young group called the Manhattans. It turned out to be a hit of moderate proportions, the first in a long series of great records that were received lukewarmly by most people. Some of the better ones (in chronological order) are: *I'm the One Love Forgot*, *Can I*, *When We're Made As One*, and *If My Heart Could Speak*. This group is still singing; in fact, *If My Heart Could Speak* came out as recently as 1970. In my opinion, the Manhattans are the most under-rated group of the entire Soul Era.

As for the Carnival label, *I Wanna Be* was only its seventh release. The Manhattans became the label's mainstay until early 1969, when they went with Deluxe. The Lovettes were a female group that made a couple of pretty ballads for Carnival while Lee Williams and the Cymbals made at least three or four records, including *I Love You More*. The Tren-teens had a nice sound with *My Baby's Gone*, but Carnival hasn't had any hits recently.

Another January event of great significance was the issue of the Temptations' *My Girl*. The record easily became one of the biggest records of the year, and has grown in stature since 1965, becoming the "*Earth Angel*" of the Soul Era.

Still another January event was one that saddened the

hearts of millions. In the latter part of the month Atlantic released number 2270, a tune by Bobby Harris called *We Can't Believe You're Gone*. The lyrics eulogized Sam Cooke, who had died recently after an incident with a distraught female. Cooke has been described in glowing terms by many, but I'd like to share with you what Jackie Wilson told me: "Sam Cooke was a beautiful man with a great voice. We got along together fine. Never had any trouble with him. When we were appearing together he'd get top billing one night and I would the next. Real easygoing, just a beautiful man." A fine tribute from one great professional to another.

Early in February, Berry Gordy's Soul label turned out its eighth release, a tune called *Shot Gun*. The artists were Detroiters known as the Allstars, and their leader was an unknown who answered to the name of Junior Walker. The Allstars were not an overnight sensation by any means. As far back as 1962 they had done *Brainwasher* for Harvey Fuqua's Harvey label. That record, along with one or two others, showed the developing style that culminated in *Shot Gun*. With his frantic saxophone, Walker soon became a contemporary Jay McNeely, with two important factors differentiating the two men. First, "Big" Jay never had a chance in the early fifties for the audience exposure that Walker could almost take for granted. Secondly, Walker has gradually made a transition from "sax player who occasionally sings" to "singer who also plays sax." For example, compare his 1965-1967 recordings (*Do the Boomerang*, *Cleo's Mood*, and *Road Runner*) with some of his later waxings (*What Does It Take To Win Your Love* and *You Gotta Hold On To That Feeling*). On his more recent efforts he has even been backed by a chorus. It doesn't

seem to matter what Junior Walker and the Allstars do. Since 1965 almost every record they have touched has turned to gold.

Early in April, Calla Records got its start. About a year later J.J. Jackson's *But It's Alright* became Calla's first major hit. At one time or another its roster of artists has included Jerry Williams, Charles Hodges, the Sandpebbles, Los Pop Tops, and the Spaniels.

Early in May, Volt Records released a record by Otis Redding called *I've Been Loving You Too Long*. It was played extensively on the top forty stations and it became a big seller, whereas Redding's earlier records were played almost exclusively on soul radio stations. As a result, he didn't become really famous until about mid-1965 (for more on Otis Redding see 1967).

The Uptown label began in May. From the beginning, its management seemed preoccupied with the idea of reviving old groups and old sounds. Doug Robertson and the Good Guys made a respectable version of *Deserie*, while the Larks sang an updated rendition of their earlier hit, *It's Unbelievable*. Little Joe and the Thrillers, whose *Peanuts* was a smash hit in 1957, returned to Uptown with a nice ballad. The label's efforts have gone largely unnoticed, however.

Probably about July, the Satellite label entered into the competition for the record fan's dollar. Unlike Uptown, its approach was strictly contemporary, its artists cut in the same mold as its competitors. At that time the Radiants, who were from Chicago, were being widely imitated everywhere, so it was almost inevitable that Chicago-based Satellite would find a group that sounded like them. Both the Ideals and the Vontastics fit into this groove. Among the other Satellite artists were Chuck

Bernard, and Baby Huey and the Baby Sitters. Satellite gave way to St. Lawrence in 1966 while retaining its original personnel. I believe that the latter folded after about two years in the business.

Early in September, Lost Nite Records began the pursuit of its oldies campaign in earnest. Many of the tunes issued by Lost Nite over the next two years were originally done back in the early fifties for obscure record companies like Pee Dee and Treat. Lost Nite focussed attention on the historical forerunner of soul music. At the same time, it provided a chance to buy copies of forty and fifty dollar records for one dollar.

Late in September or early in October, Hull issued its last record, number 772. Its title was *I'm A Hurting Inside* and it was done by Shep and the Limelights. This was only fitting since the group had also done the label's first record (as the Heartbeats) and had been Hull's most consistent and famous group through the years.

About October 7, Chess Records announced that it was discontinuing its Argo label because of confusion with British Decca's subsidiary of the same name. The problem was one that wouldn't have occurred back in May of 1956 when Argo started. It took the Soul Era with its expanded record market and its enthusiastic fans throughout the world to create such a dilemma. Through the years Argo's production included: *Ain't Got No Home*, by Clarence "Frogman" Henry; *Book Of Love*, a giant of a record by the Monotones; several sides by the Ravens; a few sides by the Dells; and more recently the Ramsey Lewis Trio's *The In Crowd*. Not long after the demise of Argo, Chess Records came up with

its Cadet subsidiary. Cadet has since become popular on the strength of many big hits by the Dells.

About mid-December, a record by Johnny and the Expressions called *Something I Want To Tell You* was released by Josie. This was especially significant inasmuch as Josie had done little in the way of rhythm and blues since about 1962, and practically nothing with a soul style. Johnny Mae Mathews and the Expressions thus symbolized a commitment to the Soul Era from one of the last holdouts among the old companies. Since late in 1965 Josie has released at least two other nice (but not as commercially successful) sounds by the Expressions and some pleasant soul sounds by the Truetones, Mighty Hannibal, Eddie Billups, and the Meters. The Meters have recently become one of the Soul Era's premiere instrumental groups with their recording of *Cissy Strut*.

One of the curiosities of 1965 was the a capella trend. It began in the New York City area with people like "Slim" Rose releasing a few records. A capella (no instruments) church choirs are not unknown but the idea of an a capella rock and roll or rhythm and blues record was a new one—almost. A decade earlier the Five Satins, who later became famous for *I Remember (In The Still Of The Night)* went into a recording session without benefit of a backup band. The band reportedly suffered a transportation breakdown enroute to the studio, but the Satins cut the record anyway. Standord Records issued *All Mine* but it went nowhere in a hurry. Another early group, the Cadillacs, made *My Girl Friend* unaided by musical support. Like *All Mine*, it failed to catch on and the Cadillacs never tried it again. A capella did become a fad for a short time, in 1965, though its influence

as a trend was largely confined to the New York-Philadelphia area. Even there, it never became a serious threat to the soul movement. Some of the better a capella sounds included *Lonely Way* by the Zircons, *Will I* by the Memories, *Baby* by the Crests, *You're Crying* by the Nutmegs, and *For Your Love* by the Del-Stars.

Do you remember *Agent Double-0 Soul* by Edwin Starr, *The Loser* by the Skyliners, *Since I Lost My Baby* by the Temptations, *Happy Feet Time* by the Montclairs, and *Just One Kiss From You* by the Impressions? Even though it has been a few years, you probably can recall at least a couple of them. All of them were big hits and all were released during 1965.

1966

In mid-January of 1966 Okeh Records issued *I Fall To Pieces* by Otis Williams and the Charms. The Charms had at least two other records out during the year but none of them sold well. The beauty of the many fine records made by Otis and his group back in the fifties was gone. A few groups (like the Dells, for example) were able to make a successful transition to the soulful style of the mid-sixties, but the Charms were never able to sound convincing, or perhaps they didn't get the right material. In any event they didn't make it in the soul "bag."

In April, a new and somewhat unusual group appeared. The Five Stairsteps consisted of four brothers and a sister (Clarence Burke Jr., James, Dennis, Kenneth, Alohe). Mrs. Burke occasionally danced at the group's appearances, while Mr. Burke played bass guitar. As if it weren't enough, baby Cubie was added to the group as soon as he reached the ripe old age of two and-a-half. The Burkes were from Chicago, and appropriately enough their first

recording, *You've Waited Too Long*, initiated the Windy C label. Windy C was a Cameo-Parkway affiliate that later released other hits by the Stairsteps and folded soon after the group left to record for Buddah. The youngsters' other hits for Windy C were *World Of Fantasy*, *Come Back*, and *Danger! She's A Stranger*. Their best record for Buddah was *The Shadow Of Your Love*. As recently as 1970 the group had a hit record with *Ooh Child*. Not since the days of Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers had such a youthful aggregate hit the top. Perhaps the success of the Stairsteps contributed to Diana Ross' decision to sponsor the Jackson Five (See 1969).

Percy Sledge got his first big break in April of 1966 when Atlantic issued his beautiful ballad, *When A Man Loves A Woman*. It went to the top in a hurry, and over the period of the next two years Percy was one of the hottest acts in America. Among his biggest hits can be counted *Warm And Tender Love*, *It Tears Me Up*, *Cover Me*, *Take Time To Know Her*, and *The Angels Listened In*. Percy was one of the first "name" artists to record in Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and thus contributed greatly to the recent fad that brought many artists into that relatively small town for recording purposes.

The May 14 issue of *Billboard* contained a story about the fate of VeeJay Records. By May, the firm had suspended its operations. A court decision on May 17 was to decide whether VeeJay would retain possession of a number of unreleased masters done by the Four Seasons. Mercury-Phillips Corporation maintained that it should be entitled to the masters. VeeJay was on the ropes, almost two million dollars in the hole, and its management wasn't in a position to keep going. An unidentified

West Coast firm was interested, and offered to buy VeeJay, contingent upon VeeJay's being named the owner of the Four Season's masters. Whether or not the West Coast firm would have actually purchased VeeJay is purely an academic matter now. Mercury-Phillips must have won the legal battle because the Four Seasons' records appeared on Phillips, and another great independent died. Late in the summer of 1966, Vivian Carter, who founded VeeJay in 1953, was managing a small record shop in downtown Gary, Indiana; the golden days of Dells and Spaniels were gone forever.

Bert Berns started a label called Shout in June, 1966. Its purpose was to cash in on the soul music boom. Berns' artist repertoire consisted of Roy C, Donald Height, Bobby Harris, Jerry-O, and Lawrence and the Arabians. But most important for Berns and Shout was the signing of Freddy Scott. Freddy, whose recording of *Hey Girl* had already become a classic, returned to stardom briefly with *Are You Lonely For Me, Cry To Me*, and *Am I Grooving You*.

About the twenty-fifth of June, The Soul label scored a pair of firsts. Jimmy Ruffin's first big hit, *What Becomes of the Brokenhearted*, was issued. Ruffin's previous records had gone pretty much unnoticed. Jimmy stayed near the top of the heap for the next year or so with hits like *I've Passed This Way Before*, and *I'll Say Forever My Love*. The other half of Soul's twin killing came in the persons of Gladys Knight and the Pips. *Just Walk In My Shoes* was their first for Soul. As most of my readers will recall, the Pips subsequently became a very hot group. Two of their finest records were *I Heard It Through The Grapevine* and *I Wish It Would Rain*.

Gamble Records began its onslaught on the charts

late in June or early in July. The Intruders' *We'll Be United* was Gamble's first record. The Intruders went on to become a very famous group. They achieved this on the basis of hits like *Cowboys To Girls*, *Love Is Like A Baseball Game*, and *Give Her A Transplant*. Much of their success can be directly attributed to the songwriting genius of Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. In fact, the duo wrote and produced songs for other artists (see the O'Jays' story) both on their own label and for artists recording for other companies. Other artists who have waxed for Gamble Records are Dee Dee Sharp (who married Kenny Gamble), Bobby Marchan, the Cruisers, and the Jaggerz.

Early in July, some two months after the VeeJay ship sank to the bottom, Jerry Butler signed with VeeJay's former crosstown competitor, Mercury. The hits were not long in coming. Jerry's third or fourth Mercury release was called *Mister Dream Merchant*; it was soon followed by *Hey*, *Western Union Man*, *Only The Strong Survive*, and *Moody Woman*. As the result of a smash hit album portraying him in an ice house setting, he has been dubbed the "Ice Man." As cool as his records are, it was my privilege to rap with Jerry not long ago, and I can attest to the fact that he is a warm, intelligent, human being as well as a great singer.

By the month of August, 1966 it was evident that the rhythm and blues revival, in the form of soul music, had reached epidemic proportions. Many of the top pop stations across the nation (and in Canada and England) were stricken with a mild form of the disease. At least the brand of soul they were playing was generally mild, with the Motown artists leading the way. A representative for a leading Miami station estimated that its play

list was almost fifty percent rhythm and blues. An important station in Detroit was playing about twenty-five percent rhythm and blues, but its management considered artists like the Supremes as pop artists, thus raising the actual figure. Even Denver, where about five percent of the population was black, and other big nationwide rhythm and blues hits hadn't fared well in previous years, showed a mark of fifteen percent rhythm and blues programming on major stations.

Sometime around October, Madelon Baker began the Audio Arts label from a home base on Melrose Avenue in Hollywood. Madelon produced the records for a group called the Incredibles. Their first record, *I'll Make It Easy*, was a moderate success as were their later records, *Another Dirty Deal*, *Heart and Soul*, and *Standing Here Crying*. Members of the group were Cal Waymon (lead singer and songwriter), Carl Gilbert, Alda Denise Edwards, and Jean Smith. Although not all of them were born in Los Angeles, those who weren't moved there at an early age. I'm not sure if this group is still together or if Audio Arts is still in business.

In November Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels' recording of Little Richard's *Good Golly Miss Molly* blended with *Devil With A Blue Dress On* became a smash hit. Mitch was a hip white kid who sang with a very soulful style, and thus was not entirely unlike the Righteous Brothers or the Young Rascals. Mitch served as a prototype for some of the white groups who have more recently bordered on a rhythm and blues style. Although there may not be a direct connection, I can't help but feel that Blood Sweat and Tears and Credence Clearwater Revival sat up and took notice when Mitch made good.

Also in November, the Platters version of *I'll Be Home* backed with *The Magic Touch* was issued on Musicor 1211. The Platters have enjoyed several hits since the mid-sixties and because they occasionally sing old hits, as they did on the above-mentioned record, many people have asked me if the Musicor group was the same as the old Mercury group of a decade ago. Only one of the original group is in the Musicor group. Musicor's Platters are led by Nate Nelson, who was a Flamingo in 1956 and was the original lead on *I'll Be Home*. More recently, Tony Williams, who sang lead for the Platters in the fifties, has formed another Platters group.

Still another November happening was *Let's Fall In Love*, a new record by a new boy-girl duo called Peaches and Herb. They have since struggled to fame primarily by reviving old hits like *For Your Love*, *Close Your Eyes*, *Love Is Strange*, and *Ten Commandments Of Love*.

In the last week of the year the Artistics' recording of *I'm Gonna Miss You* moved into the top ten rhythm and blues records. It was the group's first for Brunswick and it pushed the team squarely into the limelight that had eluded them during their brief stint with Okeh Records.

The year 1966 saw some unknowns become known. In this category were: Jimmy Holiday, whose *Baby, I Love You* on Minit featured a chorus that sounded like it had been lifted from a Righteous Brothers track; the late Darrell Banks, whose *Open The Door To Your Heart* got a lot of air play; and Aaron Neville, who had been around for years with one mediocre record after another until *Tell It Like It Is* became more than just a popular expression.

1967

Motown's Soul label got the new year off to a flying stop with *Goodnight Irene*, a tune written years ago by the famous bluesman Leadbelly. Soul's updated rendition was done by an outfit called the Originals. The record went nowhere, and deservedly so, but it was the beginning for a group that later hit with *Baby, I'm For Real* and *The Bells*. The Originals are C.P. Spencer, Henry Dixon, and Fred Gorman (who previously recorded as a single on Ric Tic), all from Detroit, and Walt Gaines, of Augusta, Georgia. Walt moved to Detroit and the group originated there, as did most of Motown's acts.

In February the Lanie label made its debut on a fine tune with the trite title, *I Love You*. The Caesars, who made the record, soon dropped out of sight followed immediately by Lanie. One of the oddities of the situation was the fact that Lanie was located in St. Louis, a city where relatively little rhythm and blues recording action was taking place, dating all the way back to World War II.

And then Hurricane Aretha struck, wreaking havoc and destroying minds everywhere. Her first Atlantic record was a storm called *I Never Loved A Man The Way I Love You*. Her next record was *Respect* and it skyrocketed to the top in a hurry. In order of appearance some of her other hits were: *Baby I Love You*, *Natural Woman*, *Chain Of Fools*, *Ain't No Way, You Send Me*, *Gentle On My Mind*, and *Share Your Love With Me*. In addition, the flip sides of some of the above were also hits, reminiscent of the mid-fifties when artists took great pains to come up with worthwhile waxings on both sides of a record. Aretha's first Atlantic album proclaim-

ed that she had arrived, and indeed this was true. As a shy youngster she had sung in the choir of the Detroit church ministered by her father, Reverend C.L. Franklin. Aretha and her sisters Carolyn and Erma, both of whom recently have shown signs of recording stardom, were all steeped in the old time religion. Among Aretha's early waxings (circa 1960 on the Checker label) is a song called *Precious Lord*. As a Columbia recording artist during the early sixties, she tried to sound too sophisticated. People sensed this, and her records were passed by. One or two of the Columbia recordings did sound like the Aretha of today and sold moderately well in the ghetto, but before 1967 few whites could honestly say that they had heard of her. In spite of the title "Lady Soul" and all the other praises that have been heaped upon her as a performer, she has shown a fondness for the quiet life and has even returned home to sing in her father's church upon occasion. More recently, her magic has rubbed off on the Sweet Inspirations, a group of girls who have backed her on her hit records. Rumors of personal problems have followed her ever since she came to fame, and there are those who think she will soon give up her career, but even if she quits tomorrow, Aretha Franklin can rest assured of a niche in everyone's rhythm and blues hall of fame.

On the first of April, Art Ripp, of pop label Kama Sutra, announced the formation of Buddah. While Buddah has become famous for its so-called "bubble gum" music, the label did issue some rhythm and blues numbers by artists such as Timothy Wilson, Chris Bartley and the Spaniels.

By mid-July, it was evident that Brenda and the Tabulations were for real. Their second record, *Who's Lovin*

You, was in the rhythm and blues top twenty and still climbing. The group's first record was called *Dry Your Eyes* and it had been the initial release on Jamie-Guyden's new Dionn label. Nor was the second record their last successful one. Talented Brenda Payton, who wrote several of the tunes recorded by the group, carried the Tabulations to fame with *When You're Gone*, *To The One I Love*, *I Can't Get Over You*, and *That's The Price You Have To Pay*. In 1970, they switched to the Top and Bottom label, and while their latest records haven't done much in the pop market, they continue to sell in the heart of the city.

In August, a group called the Esquires hit the big time with *Get On Up*, a soulful uptempo sound. It was released on the Bunky label, owned by Bunky Sheppard; Bunky had been the lead for the Sheppards, who made *Island Of Love*, and in fact some of the Esquires were former members of the Sheppards. Gilbert Moorer was lead singer for the Esquires while the other members were Millard Edwards, Alvis Moorer, and Sam Pace.

MGM's new Venture label started in October with MGM hiring Mickey Stevenson, former Motown executive, to head up the fledgling outfit. Venture has since done moderately well with a group called the Ballads.

Another young label, Phil-L.A. of Soul, got off to a good start on its fifth record, a hit by Fantastic Johnny C(orley) called *Boogaloo Down Broadway*. It was issued in October. Some eight releases and several months later Phil-L.A. of Soul uncovered what has become one of the most imitated instrumentals of the entire Soul Era. It was Cliff Nobles and Company with their version of *The Horse*.

Still another October event was the beginning of Uni's

Revue subsidiary. Revue had Mike and the Censations, and a Chicago group called the Chi-Lites. The latter group consisted of Robert Lester, Eugene Record, Credel Jones, and Marshall Thompson. Their biggest hit for Revue was *My Baby Loves Me*.

Ray Charles, who has always been at the forefront of musical change, showed in November that rhythm and blues is a style and not a kind of lyric. Earlier in the sixties he had taken a tune that had traditionally been done in a country and western style and applied his own brand of magic to it. In November, 1967, ABC Paramount released his version of *Yesterday*, one of the prettiest Beatle tunes. The Vontastics had already done *Daytripper*, but when Ray did a Beatle tune, other artists began to take note. Arthur Conley, an Atlantan who once sang with a group called the Corvettes, cut *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da*, and Wilson Pickett made a version of *Hey Jude*.

About mid-November, Buddah released a song called *Something's Missing*. It was the first for the Five Stair-steps since leaving Windy C. They have since joined Curtis Mayfield's Curtom label.

On December 10, a private plane carrying Otis Redding and an instrumental group called the Bar-Kays crashed into the murky waters of Lake Monona, near Wisconsin. His funeral was attended by the elite of the rhythm and blues world. Booker T. Jones played the organ and Joe Simon sang. As popular as Otis was before his death, it is a shame that his biggest success came afterward. *The Dock Of The Bay* went all the way to number three on the pop chart and became his first million-seller. Four days before his death, Otis went into a studio and cut a lot of numbers for future issue. Thus,

several records by the man from Macon have been released since his death.

Shortly before Christmas, Atlantic released a catchy item called *Lookin For A Fox*. The artist who made it had previously done *Thread The Needle* for Fame, but Clarence Carter really didn't become a big attraction until he signed with Atlantic. Clarence is a blind Alabamian who has come a long way from the Talladega School For The Blind. His other hits are *Slip Away, Too Weak to Fight* and *Patches*.

1967 was a year for many fine soul sounds. For appealing lyrics, how about the Miracles' recording of *The Love I Saw In You Was Just A Mirage*. For not-so-appealing lyrics (but a catchy beat, nonetheless) try Brenton Wood's *Oogum Boogum Song*. *Speak Her Name* brought much-deserved attention to Walter Jackson, who recorded for Okeh. Etta James, as they say about good wine, gets better with age; she had a fine two-sided recording for Cadet called *Tell Mama* and *I'd Rather Go Blind*.

1968

Recorded tributes to the late Otis Redding first began appearing early in January of the new year. Mark Johnson's *Ode To Otis Redding*, on Diamond, and *We're Gonna Miss You, Otis*, by A. Friend (real name Earl Gains) on Hollywood were alike in that they came out about the same time and didn't catch on. A more popular lament was William Bell's *A Tribute To A King* on the Stax label.

Early in February a sensational group came up with a record called *La-La Means I Love You*. The Delphonics were sensational but new they were not. They had previously made *He Don't Really Love You* for Moonshot

and *You've Been Untrue* for Parkway. The group consisted of lead William Hart, his younger brother Wilbert, and Randy Cain. William had organized a group called the Veltones when he was only fourteen, but, up until the release of *La-La*, things had looked rather bleak. Randy dropped out of school after two years at Lincoln University where he majored in psychology. He's probably glad he did. The Delphonics have followed through with hit after hit and are widely recognized for their close-knit harmony. In some ways they remind me of the groups of the mid-fifties. Their hits are: *I'm Sorry, Break Your Promise, Somebody Loves You, My New Love*, and *Didn't I Blow Your Mind*.

In mid-April, the Tams' hit *Be Young, Be Foolish, Be Happy* was issued on ABC Paramount. It was a long time between hits for the group from Atlanta. Their other big hit, *What Kind Of Fool Do You Think I Am?* came out several years earlier.

The month of May was an important one for Archie Bell and his group, the Drells. Throughout the country everyone was doing the "*Tighten Up*" and Archie's record was number one in the rhythm and blues idiom. *I Can't Stop Dancing* proved to be a wise choice as a follow-up record. Since then, Archie has enjoyed only a moderate level of success.

In June, the Pzazz label began in Los Angeles. One of the interesting facts about the new label was that it was owned by Paul Gayten, whose instrumental recordings had a significant effect on audiences of the late fifties. Pzazz had a good group called the Sinceres, and an old-timer in the person of Louis Jordan.

About the twentieth of July, Atlantic began a new subsidiary called Cotillion. Number 44001 was by Otis

Clay. Shortly after the label's debut, a group managed by Aretha Franklin's husband, Ted White, signed with Cotillion. The Dynamics' first release was *Ain't No Sun*, an uptempo arrangement that drew a few spins from deejays. The Dynamics really "got their thing together" when they made two powerful ballads, *The Ice Cream Song* and *What Would I Do?* These came out in 1969, and, since then, I have been waiting for them to break loose with another hit.

Do you remember Mickey and Sylvia, whose *Love Is Strange* and *Love Will Make You Fail In School* had everyone jumping back in the late fifties? This duo disappeared not long after their smash hits. Sylvia Robinson surfaced in Englewood, New Jersey where she gave birth to the All Platinum label in August, 1968. The Equations, and Willie and the Mighty Magnificents are among those who have thus far appeared on All Platinum.

Early in September, another veteran of many a rhythm and blues hit stepped behind the desk as president of a record company. This time it was Gene Chandler. Gene set up Bamboo Records in St. Louis with the aid of some of his music business associates. Bamboo has been responsible for the Profiles, who have had one or two minor scores, and Mel and Tim, whose *Backfield In Motion* scored a touchdown in the record industry. In the meantime the old "Duke Of Earl," Gene Chandler, pursued a dual career as an artist on another label.

The voice of black pride and protest was heard in September, 1968. Oh, it had been heard before in blues and rhythm and blues, but the message had always been subtle or the songs themselves suppressed. As early as 1941, Tommy McClennan's lyrical reference to a black

man outwitting a white man was not allowed to appear on record. Chuck Berry's mild objections to our educational system were vague enough that whites could easily identify with his point of view. Other stronger comments were voiced by blacks, but generally they didn't show up in rhythm and blues music. There was no mistaking James Brown's attempt at black unification with *Say It Loud*, or Los Pop Tops unique *Oh Lord Why Lord*. The latter asked, in no uncertain terms, why blacks are discriminated against simply on the basis of skin color? Since the latter part of 1968, there has been a sharp increase in the number of black-oriented tunes and protest lyrics within the idiom.

In December, Sylvia Robinson's Stang label broke from the gate with *Not On The Outside* by the Moments. Since then, this young group has shown extraordinary promise. They have hit with *Sunday, I Do*, *Lovely Way She Loves*, and one of the best records of 1970, *Love On A Two-Way Street*. The Moments could well be one of the biggest groups of the seventies because of their obvious appeal to both whites and blacks.

1968 was a happy year for two groups that moved into the spotlight, and a paradoxical pair they were, too. The Fifth Dimension was an all-black group (two girls, three guys) that sounded white, and could only be viewed as a rhythm and blues group in a very loose sense. Sly and the Family Stone was an integrated group that sounded very black. Both approaches have proven successful and both groups are well-known today.

Some of 1968's more interesting records included: *One Heart* by the Emanons, a group managed by pro football player Herb Adderley; *I Got A Sure Thing* by Ollie and the Nightingales, a new group on the Stax

label; *Love Makes A Woman*, a tune that made a record star out of Brunswick's ex-secretary, Barbara Acklin; and *Girl Watcher* by the O'Kaysions, one of those groups that comes out of nowhere, makes one hit record, and then fades forever into obscurity.

1969

Early in January of 1969, the Chess-Checker-Cadet complex, founded by Leonard and Phil Chess twenty years ago, sold out to General Recorded Tape for six-and-a-half million dollars and twenty thousand shares of common stock. I don't think this transaction brought about any change in its management or artist repertoire. In October, Len Chess died. He was reportedly one of the first rhythm and blues executives to employ the technique of echo and distortion effect.

Sid Schaeffer revived the Sue label in January with the release of a record by Jeanette "Baby" Washington. Sue was the label that produced hits for Ike and Tina Turner, and Bobby Hendricks back in the late fifties. "Baby" Washington was renowned as the lead vocalist of the Hearts (on Baton about 1956), and later as the girl who made *The Time* and *The Clock* on Neptune. In any event Sue's return to the music world has produced a nice record by the Superiors called *Heavenly Angel*, but nothing in the way of smash hits.

In the latter part of February, the Isley Brothers strode boldly into management with the founding of T-Neck Records. About two weeks later, the Isleys released their own record, *It's Your Thing*, on T-Neck 901. It wasted little time in scrambling to the top of the rhythm and blues heap, and it remained there for some time.

By April or May, it became evident that RCA Victor's

attempt to get into the "soul thing" was for real. Its management had hired Buzz Willis, former vocalist with the great Solitaires, to supervise this effort. Buzz had lured Aretha's sister, Carolyn Franklin, into the fold, and had also come up with solid performers in Sonny Til, Jimmy Radcliffe, and the Friends of Distinction. Still another RCA group, the Main Ingredient, has looked very strong since early 1970. RCA is now getting its share of the rhythm and blues action on a fairly regular basis.

In June, Art Rupe's Specialty label was reactivated with an announcement that twenty albums would soon be released. Most of the material that came forth was in the form of old tracks from the Specialty studios cut ten to fifteen years earlier. Although the release of these albums was a valuable addition to the documentation of the Rock Era, it really didn't influence the soul scene much, and Specialty hasn't shown any inclination to get its feet wet in the mainstream of contemporary music.

At the midway point in the year, Gamble and Huff were the hottest names in the songwriting end of rhythm and blues. They started the Neptune label (not to be confused with the Neptune label in Newark, New Jersey that folded about 1962) from their home base in Philadelphia and signed the O'Jays, the Indigos, and the Vibrations, while continuing to turn out hits for Atlantic's Archie Bell and Mercury's Jerry Butler.

In July, the Ethic's recording of *Farewell* climbed onto the charts. At this point, people were beginning to notice this new group from Philadelphia that recorded for Vent Records. *Farewell* was their third hit, and it was preceded by *Think About Tomorrow* and *Sad Sad*

Story. The Ethics' sound was something akin to the Intruders and the Delphonics, leading some to postulate the existence of a "Philly sound" as clearly distinguishable from a Motown or Memphis sound.

In mid-August, heavyweight champion Joe Frazier punched out a record for Capitol called *If You Go, Stay Gone*. He has appeared several times on television as a soul singer, but, thus far, hasn't had much luck with recordings.

Early in November, Motown released number 1157, a record called *I Want You Back*. It skyrocketed to a very high position in sales chiefly because it was widely exposed to white America. The Jackson Five made the Ed Sullivan Show even before they were known. Few black performers have ever been accorded this treatment, but then, few black performers have been backed by Diana Ross, white America's black sweetheart. They made a record on the Steeltown label in Gary, Indiana before Diana latched onto them, and it went nowhere. Nonetheless, the Jackson Five (lead singer Michael is 8; Marlon, 9; Jermaine, 13; Toriano, 14; Sigmund, 16) is still very hot; their hits include *ABC*, *The Love You Save*, and *I'll Be There*. They may well remain dominant figures on the music scene until their voices change. In the meantime, rumors that Diana Ross was leaving the Supremes proved to be true. Their last record together, released in November, was a tear-jerker called *Someday We'll Be Together*. Since the split, Jean Terrell has sparked the Supremes to continued success and Diana appears to be doing quite well also.

A day or two after Christmas, Cotillion released a song called *Rainy Night In Georgia*. It was a very pretty song and became quite popular, but more important was

the fact that it marked the return of Brook Benton to the rhythm and blues idiom. I have always liked his voice but his material was, for many years, geared so closely to a white audience that I had always regarded him as a Nat Cole or a black version of Tony Bennett. To me, *Rainy Night* was a distinct improvement over *Kiddio* or *The Boll Weevil Song*.

Some nice-but-forgotten records that came out in 1969 were: *Let Me Be The Man My Daddy Was*, by the Chi-Lites; *Put A Hurting On My Heart* by the Herbs; and Sonny Til's return to the music scene, *Your All I Need*.

1970

Early in 1970, Stax recording star William Bell and his manager Henry Wynn went into the record business, establishing an Atlanta-based firm called Peachtree Records. Emory and the Dynamics, Mitty Collier, James Fountain and the Soul Changers constituted Peachtree's artist repertoire.

Harvey Fuqua left the Motown organization, and, about March, set up his own production company and record label. Tri-City was based at Saginaw, Michigan.

On March 16, Tammi Terrell died in a Philadelphia hospital at the age of twenty-four. She was the daughter of a former actress, and, perhaps because of this, she took to the piano and singing quite readily. She had been a pre-med major at the University of Pennsylvania before pursuing a full-time singing career. Her first records, on Motown, which were take-offs on the Supremes, went nowhere. Tammi's main claim to fame was a series of duets done with Marvin Gaye, the most famous of which was *Ain't No Mountain High Enough*.

The September 8 edition of *Look* featured a short

article on Ike and Tina Turner, a belated sort of recognition from white America. For Tina it had been a long struggle that began in the late fifties when she first teamed with Ike and the Ikettes on *A Fool In Love*, and *I Know It's Gonna Work Out Fine*. For Ike the struggle for recognition began a few years earlier, when he formed his own band, the Kings of Rhythm. When the Soul Era replaced the Rock Era, Ike and Tina were right at home because they had always sounded funky. The Turners have made it to the top through years of hard work, both on their recordings, (Ike writes and arranges much of the material they use) and on appearances that are planned with the care of a football coach going over a game plan.

On October 4, Janis Joplin died of an overdose of drugs. She was 27, and had become popular about three years earlier. Her following was rooted in a white folk-rock tradition and, although she wasn't as widely known in the black community as she might have been, her approach to music wasn't appreciably different from that of Aretha Franklin or many of the lesser-known shouters.

Some likely choices for the best record of 1970 would be *I Need You* by Otis Leavill on Dakar, *On The Brighter Side Of A Blue World* by the Fantastic Four on Soul, *For You* by the Presidents on Sussex, *Shattered Dreams* by the Endeavors on Stop, *Love On A Two-Way Street* by the Moments, *I'll Be There* by the Jackson Five, and *Somebody's Been Sleepin' In My Bed* by One Hundred Proof Aged In Soul.

The Soul Era— Some Representative Artists

Temptations

Today, the Temptations are regarded by many as the greatest male R&B group of the sixties. Their presence on any stage or television show frequently draws top billing, to say nothing of top money. Much like James Brown, this group has worked its way into the enviable position of becoming an institution, a tradition, an almost permanent fixture in the world of music. Their choreography is virtually perfect. It has been worked out in many long hours of practice and honed to perfection in countless performances. Their voices are versatile enough that any of them can take the lead depending upon the nature of the material at hand. But most of you already know that. You probably own one of their many fine albums or several of their smash hit singles. You've heard their songs hundreds of times on the radio and seen their faces on many prime-time television extravaganzas. So who are these five men that can touch a piece of wax and turn it into gold? Where do they come from and how did they become superstars?

The story actually began in Birmingham, Alabama on July 2, 1939. On that day the group's oldest member was born. Paul Williams has been described as the practical joker of the Temptations. His musical accomplishments include the guitar, bass, and a little piano. He was a high school football player who moved to Detroit only after his school days were over.

Eddie James Kendricks was also born in Birmingham in 1939 (December 17). Like Paul Williams, he didn't

move to Detroit until he was in his late teens. Kendricks has been characterized as an individual who possesses a great motivation to succeed. His conception of how to get ahead is based on hard work, and he sometimes tends to be a loner.

Next oldest is David Ruffin, who was born January 18, 1941, in Meridian, Mississippi. His family moved to Detroit when he was very young. Ruffin's name is easily the most familiar to you and there are at least three reasons for this. First, he was usually the lead singer on the quintet's records. The fact that his brother Jimmy became something of a star in his own right certainly didn't hurt his reputation either. Finally, there was a great deal of hullabaloo surrounding his departure from the group and his subsequent records and performances as a "single" act.

Otis Williams Miles was born in Texarkana, Texas on October 23, 1941. He was only a baby when his family moved to Detroit. He is one of the bright young blacks who may continue on in the record business as an executive when his singing career is over. Incidentally, he dropped his last name when he became a recording artist and this decision set off some speculation that he was a brother of Paul Williams. Even more persistent was the rumor that he was the same Otis Williams who had been lead singer of the Charms a few years earlier. Neither of these rumors is true. His interests include football and record collecting.

Youngest of the original Temptations is Melvin Franklin, born October 12, 1942 in Montgomery, Alabama. Mel managed to fit in a year of college at Wayne State University in Detroit before the Temps became famous. Perhaps because of his educational background, he is

regarded as the group's spokesman. His chief assets are that he is responsible and outgoing.

Melvin and Otis were close friends from the days when they were with Richard Street and the Distant. This group made two or three records, one of which was called *Answer Me*. It was a cha-cha and didn't sound like anything the Temptations have ever done. When Mel and Otis left to join the Temps, I believe the Distant then became the Monitors, a group that has since had a few minor successes on Berry Gordy's V.I.P. label. In any event, Richard Street is the lead singer of the Monitors today. In the meantime, Eddie Kendricks and Paul Williams were rumored to have been members of a gospel group called the Primes. I don't think the Primes ever recorded any commercial records.

Few people are aware of the fact that David Ruffin had already been a "single" artist before the Temptations got together. He made at least two records for Checkmate, a short-lived label operated by the Chess dynasty. One of these was called *I'm In Love*, and although it was reasonably good, it gave no hint of the Ruffin-to-be. David was probably under contract to the Chess organization for only a brief spell during the early and mid-part of 1961. Since Gordy had worked with the Miracles through the Chess organization, it is likely that he and Ruffin became acquainted while the latter was recording there.

Gordy assembled the group in mid-1961 and their first record came out about August 21. It was such a bomb that, to this day, I've never seen a copy, even though I've been collecting R&B for eight years. It was entitled *Oh Mother Of Mine*, and Gordy issued it on his Miracle label. The second release was called *Your Won-*

derful Love. It sold a few copies, perhaps because it sounded much like the Impressions ever-popular recording *For Your Precious Love*, both in title and style. Gordy wrote the song himself, and I'm sure he was trying to capitalize on the Impressions' hit.

Isn't She Pretty kicked off the now famous Gordy label in April 1962. Two releases later came their most underrated tune, *The Further You Look The Less You See*. But it wasn't until early 1964 that the Temptations began to develop a reputation among white record buyers. *The Way You Do The Things You Do* was their first hit of major consequence, and by mid-1964 the Temptations were a major force in the recording world. *My Girl* was released early in 1965, and it was soon a super smash. *My Girl* "made" the Temps, in the sense that almost every record they've done since has instantly been seized and played until it could be added to their ever-growing list of hits.

Rumors of dissension began about 1967, and ended about July, 1968 when David Ruffin quit, stating that other members of the group found him objectionable. Trouble reached a head when Ruffin took legal action against Motown, claiming interference with his new group, the Fellas. Apparently the brewing feud has been resolved, because Ruffin has since recorded several tunes for Motown; by all indications he has met with moderate success.

In the meantime, there was much speculation about the replacement of Ruffin and many predictions that the group would never be successful without him. The new replacement was Dennis Edwards, a man whose raspy voice formerly paved the way for the Contours of *First I Look At The Purse* fame. Edwards' more earthy

style has perhaps prompted the change in tactics beginning with *Cloud Nine*. Since *Cloud Nine*, the Temptations have shown an increasing tendency to address themselves to problems of social importance. In fact one song, *Ball of Confusion*, touched on most of the major social issues facing the world today. Accompanying the move toward social awareness was the group's experimentation with strange psychedelic sound effects. The jury hasn't handed in its verdict on Edwards and the new-look Temptations, but an accumulating body of evidence, in the form of network television appearances and hit records, suggests that the jury is likely to find them just as great as they were in the mid-sixties.

Temptations Discography

Miracle

- 5 Oh Mother Of Mine—Romance Without Finance (8-61)
- 12 Your Wonderful Love—Check Yourself (2-62)

Gordy

- 7001 Dream Come True—Isn't She Pretty (4-62)
- 7010 Paradise—Slow Down Heart (1-63)
- 7015 I Want A Love I Can See—Further You Look The Less You See (3-63)
- 7020 May I Have This Dance—Farewell My Love (7-63)
- 7028 Way You Do The Things You Do—Just Let Me Know (2-64)
- 7030 Keep Me (with Liz Lands) (4-64)
- 7032 Girl's Alright With Me—I'll Be In Trouble (7-64)
- 7035 Baby, Baby I Need You—Why You Wanna Make Me Blue (8-64)
- 7038 My Girl—Nobody But My Baby (2-65)
- 7049 Get Ready—Fading Away (2-66)
- 7054 Ain't Too Proud To Beg—You'll Lose A Precious Love (5-66)
- 7055 Beauty Is Only Skin Deep—You're Not An Ordinary Girl (9-66)

- 7057 I Know I'm Losing You—I Couldn't Cry If I Wanted To (11-66)
 7061 All I Need—Sorry Is A Sorry Word (4-67)
 7063 You're My Everything—I've Been Too Good To You (7-67)
 7065 It's You That I Need—Don't Send Me Away (10-67)
 7068 I Wish It Would Rain—I Truly Truly Believe (1-68)
 7072 I Could Never Love Another—Gonna Give Her All The Love I Got (4-68)
 7074 Please Return Your Love To Me—How Can I Forget (8-68)
 7081 Cloud Nine—Why Did She Have To Leave Me (11-68)
 7082 Silent Night—Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer (12-68)
 7084 Runaway Child, Running Wild—I Need Your Love (2-69)
 7086 Don't Let The Joneses Get You Down—Since I've Lost You (5-69)
 7093 I Can't Get Next To You—Running Away Ain't Gonna Help You (8-69)
 7096 Psychedelic Shack (1-70)
 7099 Ball of Confusion (5-70)
Motown
 1137 I'm Gonna Make You Love Me—Place In The Sun (12-68)
 1142 I'll Try Something New—Way You Do The Things You Do (3-69)

James Brown

Who is King James? Until a few short years ago, the answer to that question would have been "the King who was responsible for the version of the Bible that bears his name." But today, for an increasing number of rabid fans, King James is none other than Mister James Brown, soul singer deluxe, "Mister Dynamite," the "King of the one-nighters." But who is James Brown? How did he become the super soul star that he is?

Unlike the King James of Biblical fame, he was born into abject poverty in 1935 in North Augusta, South Carolina. Little Richard, who was also born in 1935 in

the nearby town of Macon, Georgia, undoubtedly underwent a severe childhood, but James Brown had it even worse in many respects. He was the only child of parents who separated when James was still very young, and he went to live in Augusta with an aunt who still lives there. He did without many of the luxuries that we consider necessary; for example, he never knew store-bought underwear until the age of nine. Brown quit school in the seventh grade and began earning pocket money doing just about anything under the sun. He washed cars, ran errands, picked cotton, danced for nickels and dimes from the soldiers at Fort Gordon, and shined shoes. In fact, he delights in recalling that he shined shoes outside WRDW, a radio station that he now owns. He even boxed for a while under the tutelage of Beau Jack, who saw some promise in the boy. Indeed, the cocky youngster did manage to win sixteen of seventeen fights. But bad times were again about to descend. At the age of sixteen, he was convicted of breaking-and-entering and car theft. He was placed in reform school where he spent nearly four years. At that time it was common practice to "lend" reform school boys to farmers, and, during James' tenure, he worked on a local farm. The farmer was pleased with James' work but, so the story goes, one day James was insulted by something the farmer said, and refused to do the farmer's bidding. The farmer retaliated by threatening to send the boy back to reform school. The entire incident eventually blew over, but it set an important precedent. Brown had spoken out on his own behalf even though he had risked much by doing so. His conduct as an inmate was so exemplary that he was given a little time off for good behavior. Soon after getting out, at the age of nineteen, he got married. In what amounted to a constant struggle to

provide for himself and his new family, he turned to the church. He began singing spirituals in a church in Toccoa, Georgia. In doing so, he gained enough confidence in his ability to gather up a few musicians and take to the road in 1954. In an old ranch wagon, Brown toured some of the lower class dives in the Georgia-South Carolina area. Here he picked up enough money to keep going. A white car dealer named Raymond Smith helped him get started in the Macon area, and Brown was more or less headquartered there for a time. In the meantime, his marriage slowly dissolved into nothing, as he continued in show business while his wife remained behind in Toccoa. Billed as James Brown and the Famous Flames, the group energetically did one-nighter after one-nighter, building a local reputation, but getting nowhere nationally. Finally, a big break came when Syd Nathan of King Records got wind of the group and decided to record a tune Brown had written. The first recording session probably took place in mid-February and *Please, Please, Please* was announced in the March 3, 1965 edition of *Billboard*. The tune has since become a JB standard, and it sold well enough then for King's Federal subsidiary to continue to record the young group. On the other hand, the Flames did not become overnight successes even though the time was ripe for it. Elvis Presley was beginning to open the door for the acceptance of black artists in 1956, and Little Richard, Clyde McPhatter, Jackie Wilson, the Platters, and countless others were about to walk through. The Flames stuck so close to a basic R&B sound that they were still relatively unknown to whites until about 1964. Also the group's efforts were mainly in the ballad vein and, while many of these were good, they never really caught the fancy of a

wide segment of the record-buying public. Of the records the group released over the next few years, *Try Me* really did well. JB and the Famous Flames began to live a little better, and Brown began investing his money wisely and organizing his own shows, paying close attention to detail and showmanship. The upshot of this was that Brown became a hero to black people throughout the United States, a man from the streets who pulled himself up by the bootstraps and made good. In the early sixties, Nathan decided to put the Flames on the parent King label. Brown was still writing much of his own material, thus collecting royalties from songwriting while gradually building a small fortune through singing. I can still remember white people asking "Who is James Brown?" when *Prisoner of Love* began to break pop in the spring of 1963. From then on, it was mostly a matter of staggering to the bank under the load of money he made, or at least it would have been for most singers. James, however, continued to earn his claims as "king of the one-nighters" while branching out into other aspects of the recording industry. Both Bobby Byrd and James Crawford of the Flames have recorded songs under Brown's guidance. Drifting even farther afield more recently, Brown now owns at least two radio stations. Furthermore, according to the manager of WRDW, with whom I talked a few months before this was written, Brown has been negotiating for a third and possibly a fourth. In September of 1969, with help from his old friend Ray Smith, he opened a chain of soul-food stores called Gold Platter Incorporated. His assets were recently valued at somewhere in the neighborhood of four million dollars. Undoubtedly, his business success can be attributed in large part to the close attention and dili-

gence he has given to everything he has worked at, dating from lean childhood years.

James Brown is more than just a wealthy black capitalist who now employs about a hundred people. He is a warm human being who has never sacrificed the ideals to which he subscribes. In fact, JB is probably the most important black singer alive today from a sociological viewpoint. No other artist or artists have been so adept or so bold at driving home the message of black people. No other singer has had the impact of James Brown, the man who, in spite of his millions and his belated acceptance in the white community, has readily identified with the black man on the street.

In the mid-sixties, a San Francisco attorney named Don Warden met Brown and was greatly impressed by his keen mind and dedication to his business. Warden had recently initiated a black self-help program and he was searching for a dynamic figure to lend prestige to the movement. With the encouragement of Warden, James Brown toured the ghettos of San Francisco in September of 1966, talking with kids and telling them to stay in school. Since then his role in the struggle for black freedom has steadily increased. His record, *Don't Be A Dropout*, not only sold a million copies, but resulted in an invitation from Vice-President Humphrey to head a nationwide stay-in-school program. Perhaps the most hard-hitting of his message songs was *Say It Loud (I'm Black and I'm Proud)*, a record that helped unify blacks throughout the country. In the meantime, he has not become openly hostile as have some black leaders, but has continued to strive for the kind of America where everyone can have equal opportunity and the respect of his fellow men. An example of this came in August,

1968, when he took his show to Saigon to perform for our servicemen in an area that had recently been hit with enemy rockets. Since then, he has expressed a desire to return. On the eve of Dr. King's murder, he appeared on Boston television at the request of the mayor in an effort to keep people off the street. For activities like this, he has been criticized by some of the more militant black leaders, but James Brown stands firmly on the convictions that brought him from shoe-shine boy to the "King of Soul."

Trying to locate and pinpoint dates for all the singles done by James Brown is truly a monumental task. Thus, the following discography may be partially incomplete. Furthermore, I haven't attempted to list the recordings of Bobby Byrd, James Crawford, Yvonne Fair, Marva Whitney or any other of a number of singers who are or who have been members of Brown's supporting cast.

James Brown Discography

Federal

- 12258 Please, Please, Please—Why Do You Do Me (3-56)
- 12277 No, No, No—Hold My Baby's Hand (8-56)
- 12289 Let's Make It—Just Won't Do Right (9-56)
- 12290 I Won't Plead No More—Chonnie On Chon (10-56)
- 12292 Gonna Try—Can't Be The Same (2-57)
- 12295 Messing With The Blues—Love Or A Game (5-57)
- 12300 You're Mine, You're Mine—I Walked Alone (6-67).
- 12311 That Dood It—Baby Cries Over The Ocean (11-57)
- 12316 Begging Begging—That's When I Lost My Heart (2-58)
- 12337 Try Me—Tell Me What I Did Wrong (10-58)
- 12348 I Want You So Bad—There Must Be A Reason (3-59)
- 12352 I've Got To Change—It Hurts To Tell You (5-59)
- 12361 Good Good Loving—Don't Let It Happen To Me (9-59)
- 12364 It Was You—Got To Cry (11-59)
- 12369 I'll Go Crazy—I Know It's True (2-60)
- 12370 Think—You've Got The Power (4-60)

- 12378 This Old Heart—Wonder When You're Coming Home (8-60)

King

- 5423 The Bells—And I Do What I Want (10-60)
 5438 Hold It—The Scratch (both instrumentals) (12-60)
 5442 If You Want Me—Bewildered (2-61)
 5466 Love Don't Love Nobody—I Don't Mind (3-61)
 5485 Sticky-Suds (both instrumentals) (4-61)
 5524 Baby, You're Right—I'll Never Let You Go (8-61)
 5547 I Love You, Yes I Do—Just You And Me, Darling (9-61)
 5573 Lost Someone—Crossfiring (12-61)
 5614 Night Train—Why Does Everything Happen To Me (3-62)
 5657 Shout & Shimmy—Come Over Here (6-62)
 5687 Mashed Potatoes U.S.A. (10-62)
 5701 Three Hearts In a Tangle—I've Got Money (11-62)
 5710 Every Beat Of My Heart—Like A Baby (12-62)
 5739 Prisoner of Love—Choo-Choo (4-63)
 5803 Signed, Sealed and Delivered—Waiting In Vain (9-63)
 5829 I've Got To Change—The Bells (11-63)
 5842 Oh Baby Don't You Weep—Part II (1-64)
 5853 In the Wee Wee Hours—Please, Please, Please (2-64)
 5876 Again—How Long Darling (6-64)
 5899 So Long—Dancin' Little Thing (6-64)
 5922 Tell Me What You're Gonna Do—I Don't Care (8-64)
 5956 Medley—Fine Old Foxy Self (11-64)
 5968 Just Won't Do Right—Have Mercy Baby (2-65)
 5999 Pappa's Got A Brand New Bag—Part II (7-65)
 6015 I Got You—I Can't Help It (I Just Do, Do, Do) (11-65)
 6020 Lost Someone—I'll Go Crazy (1-66)
 6025 Ain't That A Groove—Part II (2-66)
 6032 Come Over Here—Tell Me What You're Gonna Do (3-66)
 6035 It's A Man's Man's World—Is It Yes Or Is It No (4-66)
 6048 Money Won't Change You—Part II (7-66)
 6056 Don't Be A Drop-Out Part II (10-66)
 6064 Christmas Song—Part II (11-66)
 6065 Sweet Little Baby Boy—Part II (12-66)
 6071 Bring It Up—Nobody Knows (12-66)
 6086 Kansas City—Stone Fox (3-67)

- 6110 Cold Sweat—Part II (7-67)
 6122 Get It Together—Part II (10-67)
 6133 Funky Soul No. 1—Soul of James Brown (11-67)
 6141 Night Train—Why Does Everything Happen To Me (3-62)
 6144 I Can't Stand My Self—There Was A Time (12-67)
 6155 I Got The Feelin'—If I Ruled The World (3-68)
 6164 Here I Go—Shhhhhh (For A Little While) (4-68)
 6166 Licking Stick—Part II (5-68)
 6187 Say It Loud—Part II (8-68)
 6198 Goodbye My Love (11-68)
 6203 You Know It—Santa Claus Goes Straight To The Ghetto (12-68)
 6204 Tit For Tat—Believers Shall Enjoy (12-68)
 6213 Give It Up Or Turn It Loose—I'll Lose My Mind (1-69)
 6222 Soul Pride—Part II (3-69)
 6224 I Don't Want Nobody To Give Me Nothing—Part II (4-69)
 6240 Popcorn—The Chicken (5-69)
 6245 Mother's Popcorn—Part II (6-69)
 6250 Lowdown Popcorn—Top of the Stack (8-69)
 6255 Let a Man Come In and Do The Popcorn—Sometime (10-69)
 6258 World—Part II (9-69)
 6290 Funky Drummer (2-70)
 6292 It's A New Day (2-70)
 6298 Ain't It Funky Now (11-69)
 6310 Brother Rapp (4-70)

Smash

- 1898 Caldonia—Evil (4-64)
 1908 Things I Used To Do—Out Of The Blue (6-64)
 1919 Out Of Sight—Maybe The Last Time (7-64)
 1975 Devil's Hideway—Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe (3-65)
 2008 Try Me—Pop's Got A Brand New Bag (8-65)
 2028 New Breed—Part II (2-66)
 2042 Boo-ga-loo (6-66)
 2064 Our Day Will Come—Let's Go Get Stoned (10-66)
 2093 Jimmy Mack—What Do You Like (5-67)

Bethlehem

- 3089 Yours And Mine—I Love You Porgy (6-67)

The Dells

Most of the Dells began singing non-professionally at a very early age, as was the case with many of the great R&B artists of the 50's. Their first public appearances came as church choir members in hometown Harvey, Illinois. The original members were Marvin Junior (1st tenor), Johnny Funches (lead), Vern Allison (2nd tenor), Mike McGill (baritone) and Chuck Barksdale (bass). All were friends from schooldays at Thornton High in Harvey. Immediately following graduation, they decided to form a singing group. The earliest practice sessions took place in a shed behind the McGill home. Barksdale described these first sessions as "ridiculous." It was evident that all the boys were blessed with vocal ability, but at the same time, none of them knew anything about harmony or song arrangement. "We did one or, at the most, two part harmony" said Barksdale. Mike McGill owned a pile of old, scratchy records, including releases by the Dominoes and Drifters. The group listened to these waxings, then tried to imitate the sound they heard. I asked Mike about the value of these first experiences and his reply was quite frank: "We learned how to sing." Apart from learning how to sing *together*, which is what I'm certain Mike meant, some of their songs were developed at that time.

McGill studied Spanish at Thornton High, and thus originated the name El Rays, meaning "The Kings." As the El Rays, the group went to the Chess Record Company and was immediately given a record contract. "Why, I don't know!" said Barksdale, laughing as he spoke. *Darling I Know* was released in May of 1954. It wasn't very successful; in fact, their royalty check came to a whopping sixty dollars.

The group then moved on to the newly-formed Vee-Jay label. They stayed with VeeJay for many years, turning out hit after hit and establishing a national reputation for themselves. But, just as *Darling I Know* flopped, so did their first VeeJay sound, *Tell The World*. It was important, nonetheless, because of the fact that elements of their distinctive style first became evident on this record. *Dreams of Contentment* was next, and it still stands today as one of their most beautiful records. Still, the Dells had done three records without a single hit, and the situation must have been a discouraging one for the young group. Perhaps it would be legitimate to say that on May 21, 1956, the Dells experienced what would later become recognized as the turning point in their career. On that date, they walked into a studio in Chicago and recorded four songs. Three of them never attracted much attention (in fact, two of the three were never even released), but the fourth one has become synonymous with them. *Oh What A Nite* was released not long after the May 21 session, and its popularity soon became evident to VeeJay Records executives. Realizing that they had a good thing going, VeeJay did its best to keep the group happy. Throughout the late fifties, ads in the trade magazines calling attention to VeeJay's new products frequently gave much space to Dells records. The quintet responded by giving the world many memorable pieces of wax. Some of the better Vee-Jay sides (apart from those already mentioned) were *Why Do You Have To Go*, *Pain In My Heart*, *Dry Your Eyes*, *I'm Calling*, and *A Distant Love*. The latter was an uptempo piece, while the other four were ballads. Late in 1958, the group was involved in an automobile accident on the Ohio Turnpike. Fortunately, none of the

five were killed, but it did seriously limit both their personal appearances and recording sessions for quite awhile.

In 1960 Johnny Funches left the group. At that time, the group hadn't had a big hit for three years. The Dells told me that Funches simply got tired of doing the never ending tours of one-nighters which frequently characterize the lives of performers. At any rate, Marvin Junior took over duties as lead singer, while Johnny Carter was chosen as the new 1st tenor. Carter was far from a neophyte, however, having sung with the Flamingos from the time that group started until 1956. This personnel change, the only one in the long history of the Dells, explains why their recent records sound so unlike the early ones. On the other hand, the acquisition of Carter didn't result in an immediate flood of hits.

I think that much of this was due to the fact that Marvin was trying to substitute for Johnny Funches instead of trying to develop a unique style. I'm not blaming Marvin or the group for trying to recapture a style that had been successful, but for several years they sounded like a warmed over version of their 1956 style. The public responded accordingly, and many people thought that they had dissolved. It was not until about 1965 that they began to develop the formula that had made them so successful in recent years. Carter first began to provide an echoing falsetto on the VeeJay version of *Stay In My Corner*.

In 1962, they came back to the Chess Record Company to record for its Argo subsidiary. During this period they toured with Dinah Washington and later with Ray Charles. Chuck told me that the Dells also did the background for Barbara Lewis' *Hello Stranger*.

In 1964, they returned to VeeJay to do *Stay In My Corner* and some rather mediocre sides. In 1966, it began to look like they were on a sinking ship (See 1966 in the chapter covering the Soul Era) so they came back to Chess once more, to record this time on the Cadet label. Since 1966, all of their recorded material has come forth from either Chess or Cadet. The first couple of Cadet releases went virtually ignored, although *The Change We Go Through For Love* was later reissued. The Dells' ballads have always been their greatest strength, but, ironically, it was a jump called *There Is* that reawakened the public to their talents. *Oh-oh I Love You* started them on a consecutive string of hits that included *Love Is So Simple*, *Love Is Blue—I Can Sing A Rainbow*, *Please Don't Change Me Now*, *Always Together*, and the reissued versions of *Stay In My Corner* and *Oh What A Nite*.

It has been a long, long haul from Harvey, Illinois to such visible signs of success as "The Ed Sullivan Show," "Hollywood Palace," and "The Tonight Show," but the Dells have made it and made it big. Individually they are a wonderful blend of pride, humility, and warmth. Pride in their great talent, which McGill feels, along with a lot of luck, has kept the group together all these years, and humility, which is reflected in Barksdale's lavish praise for songwriter Bobby Miller and arranger Charles Stepney ("He's the world's greatest a&r man"). They have a warmth that puts you at ease and gives you the feeling that you've known them for years. I am pleased to say that I found the group to be just as fine off-stage as they are on. I hope that all of you will someday have the opportunity to see and hear the Dells, a fine contemporary group, but at the same time one of the last of the great R&B giants of the mid-fifties.

Dells Discography**Checker**

794 Darling I Know—Christine (El-Rays) (5-54)

VeeJay

- 134 Tell The World (5-55)
 166 Dreams of Contentment—Zing Zing Zing (1-56)
 204 Oh What A Night—Jo Jo (7-56)
 230 Movin On—I Wanna Go Home (12-56)
 236 Why Do You Have To Go—Dance Dance Dance (3-57)
 251 Q Bop She Bop—A Distant Love (8-57)
 258 Pain In My Heart—Time Makes You Change (11-57)
 274 The Springer—What You Say Baby (4-58)
 292 Jeepers Creepers—I'm Calling (8-58)
 300 My Best Girl—Wedding Day (12-58)
 324 Baby, Open Up Your Heart—Dry Your Eyes (9-59)
 338 Oh What A Night—I Wanna Go Home (2-50)
 376 Hold On To What You Got—Swinging Teens (3-61)
 595 Shy Guy—What Do We Prove (5-64)
 615 Wait Til Tomorrow—Oh What A Good Nite (8-64)
 674 Stay In My Corner—It's Not Unusual (4-65)
 712 Hey Sugar Don't Get Serious—Poor Little Boy (12-65)

Argo

- 5414 I'm Going Home—God Bless The Child (5-62)
 5428 The Bossa Nova Bird—Eternally (10-63)
 5442 If It Ain't One Thing It's Another—Hi Diddly Dee Dum (6-63)
 5456 After You—Goodbye, Mary Ann (10-63)

Chess

- 1992 You Can't Come In—I'm So Afraid (with Jo Ann Garrett) (1-67)

Cadet

- 5538 Thinkin' About You—The Change We Go Through (8-66)
 5551 Run For Cover—Over Again (12-66)
 5563 Inspiration—You Belong To Someone Else (4-67)
 5574 Oo-Oh I Love You—There Is (9-67)
 5590 There Is—Show Me (1-68)
 5599 Wear It On Our Face—Please Don't Change Me Now (4-68)

- 5612 Stay In My Corner—Love Is So Simple (6-68)
 5631 Does Anybody Know I'm Here—Make Sure (1-69)
 5636 Hallways Of My Mind—I Can't Do Enough (3-69)
 5641 Hallelujah Baby—Sing A Rainbow/Love Is Blue (5-69)
 5649 Oh What A Night—Believe Me (8-69)
 5658 Sittin' On The Dock Of the Bay—When I'm In Your Arms (10-69)
 5663 Oh What A Day—The Change We Go Through (1-70)
 5667 Open Up My Heart—Nadine (3-70)

The O'Jays

In Canton, Ohio, about 1958 or 1959, a group of boys attending Canton McKinly High decided to form a singing group. This was not unusual. Many high schoolers got together and decided they were going to become stars overnight. Few have had either the talent or the determination to go very far. The O'Jays had both. Two of them, Eddie LeVert and Walter William, had even been part of a quartet called The LeVert Brothers, whose gospel offerings had even been heard on a local radio station. With Bobby Massey, William Powell, and Bill Isles, the group made appearances at local YMCA's, high school dances and teen clubs. The Drifters were popular at this time, and the group tended to lean toward that type of sound. One day Ed and Bobby were approached by a man on the street who asked them if they knew anyone who could sing. The man's name was Andreotti, and when the boys finally convinced him that they could sing, their amateur days were no more. Andreotti had written some songs, and was trying to get a foothold in the record business. He took them to New York to audition for Decca. In addition to Andreotti's songs, the boys had a new arrangement of *Over The Rainbow* which was "borrowed" by the Dimensions when they had such a success with that old standard. Anyway, the Decca peo-

ple didn't express much interest, so the group, still armed with Andreotti's songs, went to Cincinnati to record for the King Record Company. Eddie told me that King president, Syd Nathan, slapped the Mascots monniker on the group as they signed a record contract. Immediately after the signing they went downstairs to the studio and cut about eight sides. They walked out of the building that day, and as fate would have it, they haven't been back since. Although the sides were released periodically by King in the early sixties they apparently weren't heavily promoted and all of them were commercial failures (Ed thinks that King still has some of their unreleased sides collecting dust somewhere). In spite of this, I've heard some of these sides, and they're really pretty good. Perhaps King didn't think they would sell, but whether they were right or wrong, it is clear from listening to them that the group could harmonize well. In any event, the group got a big break when they became friends with the then Cleveland disc jockey Eddie O'Jay. Eddie not only gave them his name, but helped the group in three important ways. He helped get them booked for some shows in the Cleveland area, secured a recording date in Detroit for them (from whence came *Miracles*) and, last but not least, sent them to his friend H.B. Barnum who had been on the West Coast music scene for a few years, both as performer and producer. His own records had never done consistently well, so in the early sixties he decided to devote more time to the production of commercial discs. For nearly three years he worked with the O'Jays, teaching them showmanship, the fine points of singing, and instilling a confidence within them. In the meantime, they backed a number of leading vocalists (including Lou Rawls), wrote

songs, and in general, "paid their dues." Eddie Levert and Walter William wrote *Crack Up Laughing* and the tune was recorded on Barnum's Little Star label. When it began to meet with public acceptance, Imperial Records made a deal to release the record under the Imperial banner. Subsequent O'Jays records were also released on Imperial due to a leasing arrangement. When *Lonely Drifter*, also written by members of the group, was released, it became a hit, not only because of the fine vocal work but also because of the "crashing waves" effect. This was simply dubbed in by H.B. after the vocal part was recorded, according to Eddie. With Barnum as the guiding force, the group put out several songs for Imperial that were at least mildly successful. They also proved to be crowd pleasers on tour, and by 1965 had established themselves on the national scene. In the meantime, Barnum faded out of the picture when Nick DeCaro and Tommy DePluma began producing their later releases on Imperial.

Late in 1966, Bill Isles decided to call it a career. While the rest of the group held out hopes for his return, it was not to be. The O'Jays stopped making appearances and cutting records for a short period while they tried to readjust to the loss. Rather than add a new man, they worked hard, pulled together, and made the adjustment from quintet to quartet.

The situation began to look a lot brighter when Jules Berger and Leo Frank (of Leo's Casino in Cleveland) took an interest. These two men gave the O'Jays a "comeback" appearance at the Casino and, during that engagement, the group demonstrated that they could indeed bounce back. But the assistance they received also came in the form of cold, hard cash. The group con-

tinued to make personal appearances, while at the same time they had discontinued their recording obligation with Imperial. In the process of looking for a new recording agreement, they were playing the Apollo Theatre in New York when disc jockey Rocky Gee asked them to record for him. The O'Jays thought it over for awhile, then returned to New York and cut a few sides with producer Richard King. Rocky took the promotional discs to Bell Records and the new company liked them. Fortunately for everyone concerned, the personnel loss brought with it a decision to change their style ever so slightly. This change was in keeping with the times and the blend of song, arrangement, and production. It resulted in a hit with *I'll Be Sweeter Tomorrow* and an even bigger hit with followup *Look Over Your Shoulder*, another song which came out of the first session for Bell. A second session in New York resulted in the release of the later Bell sides. While with Bell, President Larry Uttal tried to arrange for the renowned Gamble-Huff songwriting and arranging team to work with the O'Jays. This deal never did come off, but it foretold the future. Bell sold out to a larger corporation in late 1968 or early 1969 and, when they did, Bobby Massey told me, "that automatically made us a free group...because our contract wasn't assignable to anyone else." Apparently this clause had been put in the contract to prevent a recurrence of the adjustment like the fellows had to make when Imperial sold out to Liberty. Although Imperial continued to release O'Jays records, as the following discography reveals, this meant new company policy, new personnel, etc.

Gamble and Huff, upon hearing that the O'Jays were free, went to Cleveland to talk with them. Out of this

came an agreement to record for Neptune, the new label that Gamble and Huff had on the planning board. So, in May of 1969, the group went to Philadelphia and cut "about eight or ten sides," among which was *One Night Affair*. A second session in November resulted in their Christmas song, *Without The One You Love*, and *Deeper*.

Some measure of the group's broader acceptance by whites came in early 1970 when they made an impressive appearance on the NBC "Tonight" Show. As of this writing *Looky Looky* promises to become one of their biggest ever, and if any of the Gamble and Huff magic rubs off on them, they could well be on the music scene for years to come.

O'Jays Discography

Daco

Miracles (12-59)

Apollo

540 Miracles (1-60)

Little Star

124 Crack Up Laughing—How Does It Feel (2-63)

Imperial

5942 Crack Up Laughing—How Does It Feel (5-63)

5976 Lonely Drifter—That's Enough (10-63)

66007 The Storm Is Over—Stand Tall (2-64)

66025 I'll Never Stop Loving You (4-64)

66037 Lovely Dee—You're On Top (7-64)

66076 Oh, How You Hurt Me—Girl Machine (12-64)

66102 Lipstick Traces (4-65)

66121 Whip It Up Baby—I Cried My Last Tear (7-65)

66131 Let It All Out—You're The One (9-65)

66145 I'll Never Let You Go—It Won't Hurt (12-65)

66162 Pretty Words—I'll Never Forget You (4-66)

66177 No Time For You—A Blowing Wind (6-66)

66197 Stand—In For Love (9-65)

Minit

32015 Working On Your Case—Hold On (1-67)

Bell

691 I'll Be Sweeter Tomorrow—I Dig Your Act (11-67)

704 Look Over Your Shoulder—I'm So Glad I Found You (2-68)

737 Going Going Gone—The Choice (8-68)

749 I Miss You—Now That I Found You (12-68)

770 Don't You Know A True Love—That's Alright (3-69)

Neptune

12 One Night Affair (6-69)

18 Branded Bad—You're The Best Thing Since Candy (10-69)

20 Without The One You Love (12-69)

22 Deeper (In Love With You)—I've Got The Groove (3-70)

31 Looky Looky—Let Me In Your World (6-70)

A Peek Into The Future

Where is rhythm and blues headed? What new shapes or forms, if any, will the idiom take in the next few years? In what way will sociological developments play a part in the rhythm and blues music of the future? These questions, and similar ones, are being raised by students of music, record industry executives, and performers themselves. To some extent, every normal human being is curious about the future, and if you've read this far, you're probably curious about the future of rhythm and blues. We'll look first at what some interested (and interesting) parties have said about the subject.

Once again I'll refer the reader to my conversation with the Dells:

LM: What trends, if any, do you anticipate in the future for rhythm and blues?

Marvin Junior: Rhythm and blues, or rock and roll, or whatever they want to call it, will be here forever. What they'll do, they'll change the title maybe. Country and western, rhythm and blues, they'll be here.

LM: Within the idiom of rhythm and blues do you think there will be any changes: For example, do you think that it will tend to lean toward the psychedelic thing as some of your recent records have?

MJ: No! No I don't.

Mike McGill: That's just a fad.

MJ: I think it's gonna go back to the early fifties. If you'll notice more and more ballads are hittin' now. There was a time a few years ago when you couldn't sell a ballad; now they're sneaking in. I think it's gonna go all the way back to the original stage of the groups; more of what we call the "doo wop" things.

The Dells can remember those early days of rhythm and blues because they were a part of that scene. The answer to my original question prompted an entirely different kind of answer from young Archie Bell. Like many young men today, he tends to see some revolutionary changes looming ahead in the near future:

LM: What trends do you anticipate in the future for rhythm and blues? Do you think it will change and, if so, what direction will it take?

AB: Well, basically, I don't think it's going to change that much unless we find another Elvis or the Beatles, but I think a lot of music is gonna be done by machines and computers. Sly (and the Family Stone) uses a lot of weird sounds in his music. As long as we're here, there's going to be progress and change; I just hope I'm able to change with it.

While Archie Bell thinks that technology is the answer to the question of where rhythm and blues is headed, another great performer thinks we've already found a new Beatles:

LM: What change do you anticipate in the future for soul music? Do you think it will change and if so in what fashion?

Jackie Wilson: I'd probably have to ask James Brown, I don't know.

LM: In other words James Brown is...

JW: Well, he's contributed quite a lot. He's picked up where it left off. It dropped after the Beatles then he came along and boom, it went back up again.

LM: I suppose You're referring to songs like *Say It Loud I'm Black And I'm Proud*.

JW: Right, that's correct.

Billboard's Soul Sauce columnist Ed Ochs, in the December 20, 1969 issue of that magazine, opined that the seventies would bring an expansion of soul music and the entire soul culture. Ed predicted that more soul artists would be seen on television and that the per-

formers themselves would receive opportunities for commercials, plays, and movies that just weren't open back in the fifties and sixties.

As far as the music itself is concerned, I think that through the next few years we will see two concurrent, yet more or less independent trends. One of these I will call the "light" or "pop-soul" movement. As suggested by the latter term, it will involve a gradual blending of the music produced originally by blacks for white audiences with the music made by "blue-eyed" soul singers. I have noticed in recent months that an increasing number of white singers are making a conscious effort to inject more feeling, more emotion into their recordings. Black performers found several years ago that they could make it big in the white world by paying close attention to harmony and developing lyrical themes about universal topics like love and the problems of growing up. The success of the Fifth Dimension and the Four Tops, two black groups that have recently bridged the gap between pop and soul, will undoubtedly prompt other black artists to lean hard in that direction. I think that in the next four or five years this gradual blending process will result in a wide variety of pop-soul artists that will be hard to identify racially just by listening to their records. Some other current artists that could well be in the forefront of this movement include: the Supremes, Miracles, Intruders, Delphonics, Jackson Five, Dells, Impressions, Tyrone Davis, Young Rascals and, Five Flytes Up.

An article by Eliot Tiegel in Billboard's December 27, 1969 issue supports my prediction of a trend toward the integration of pop and soul. In the article, a prominent radio personality predicted the end of radio-for-blacks-

only within five years. Based on the fact that blacks were buying some records by white soul artists, "Wolfman Jack" expressed his opinion that the future would bring a gradual melding of musical tastes with an accompanying integration of radio station personnel.

I disagree that black radio, as it exists today, will disappear in the near future. "Wolfman Jack" has failed to take into account the other major trend that I hinted at earlier. Closely bound to the contemporary black man's struggle for total freedom is the need for a black identity that can be promoted through music geared strictly for the taste of a black radio audience. This is what Jackie Wilson meant when he cited James Brown in connection with the future of rhythm and blues. Wilson is absolutely right in singling out JB, for Brown has long been in the forefront of the move toward "stone" or "funky" soul music. Artists in this "bag" aim at the black record buyer by promoting new dances, using complicated rhythms, dealing with protest or black identity lyrics, and employing phrases commonly associated with blacks. Some of the other "funky" artists who will likely be important in the next few years are: Wilson Pickett, the Isley Brothers, Aretha Franklin, Sam and Dave, and Kool and the Gang. The funky movement will continue, black-oriented radio will remain a fixture, and the use of "social change" lyrics will increase as long as blacks feel threatened by the white society in which they live. Unfortunately, this threat shows signs of continuing for a long time to come.

A separate trend in a related area may indirectly affect these two major shifts in the nature of the music. In the previous chapter I mentioned that a few black performers have already moved into executive or entrepreneurial

positions in the record industry. There are a large number of bright, young, black performers, and I think that several of them will move into management in the next few years. This movement will tend to support rather than suppress the continued creativity of future black artists.

One final issue is the future popularity of rhythm and blues. In mid-1969 *Billboard* reported a trend toward playing rhythm and blues on underground rock stations. Hopefully, this trend will continue, especially since rhythm and blues forms the basis for much of the underground white rock.

One generalization which I feel safe about is that the music of the Pioneer Era and the Rock And Roll Era will live on through the interest of a large number of war babies who grew up in the fifties. Such interest was great enough to provide a large turnout for several old-time rock and roll shows held recently in New York. These shows featured artists like the Harptones, Solitaires, Jive Five, Gary "U.S." Bonds, and the Elegants. In addition, oldies albums have consistently sold well enough to indicate that there is a great deal of interest in the old sounds. Not long ago a Rhythm And Blues Hall Of Fame was established in California for the preservation and advancement of black music in America. Already associated with this are famous names like Johnny Otis and Roy Milton. A small number of serious record collectors have also done their best to generate enthusiasm for the rhythm and blues sounds of the fifties. All of these signs are indicative that a real, if not always visible, popularity will continue for years to come.

On the other hand, there has been some recent talk among black dee jays that the popularity of soul music

among whites has declined because of a deliberate "black-lash" following soul's domination of the top forty record charts during 1967 and 1968. Some of them have charged that white-owned stations are deliberately programming less soul music. While this may actually be true in some instances, I think much of the temporary decline can be attributed to the changing whims of the public. An upsurge in the popularity of country and western music followed the slight decline in rhythm and blues but now this too has lost its momentum. In the meantime, top forty stations have continued to program some of the better-known soul artists. In summary, I think that sometime in the next couple of years someone will add a few new wrinkles or revise a few old ones, and soul's popularity will show a gradual resurgence in white America. Meanwhile, I agree with Marvin Junior's comment: "Rhythm and blues, or rock and roll, or whatever you want to call it, will be here forever."

Appendix One:

Selected Singles— All Time Greats

This appendix consists of a compilation of some of the all-time great record releases in the field of rhythm and blues. Though there were many ways I could have done this, I chose to select twenty recordings from each year of a twenty-year span. I did so fully understanding that some great songs would be omitted and some near-greats would be listed. Obviously, this selection process is highly subjective. It was compiled not as an absolute listing to which everyone must agree, but as a general guideline to the enjoyment of rhythm and blues records. I fully expect that avid students of this music will disagree on some of my choices, but I think there will be a large measure of agreement on many others. I have tried to minimize my own biases by striking some semblance of balance between fast and slow songs, single artists and group efforts, and even black and white artists. Nonetheless, I fully recognize my preference for black artists and for ballads.

In many cases, records released in December didn't reach an appreciable measure of popularity until January or February. For purposes of consistency, all records are listed under the year of release.

To further simplify matters, I have chosen to ignore both albums and EP's. The rationale behind this was that most great albums cuts are eventually released as singles anyway. There are some exceptions (for example, the Spaniels' rendition of *Red Sails In The Sunset*), but this rule generally holds true.

All records are listed in alphabetical order according to the title. No attempt is made to evaluate the recordings, either within any list, or among the several lists.

There have been many instances when the same artists release as many as four or five consecutive records that sound much the same. Where I felt the overall sound was worthy of inclusion on the list, I have selected only one or two of them in the interest of providing a variety of selections. I have been especially inclined to do so in years that I felt there were many good recordings, and thus, I was forced to omit many worthy titles.

Since it was a common practice (especially in the late fifties and early sixties) to label anything R&B that wasn't absolutely white "middle-of-the-road-ish," a number of such non-R&B type items were forced onto the R&B charts via the expanded size of the white record market. This crowded out many worthy R&B discs, to the extent that the casual reader won't remember all of my selections. In fact, this crowding out was so extensive that *Billboard* didn't even review some of the finest records ever made. Thus, it is impossible to tell when they were released and, consequently, I was forced to exclude them. I won't pursue this argument further inasmuch as I have dealt with it in Chapter One.

1950

1. All My Dreams—Savannah Churchill—Arco 1257
2. Count Every Star—Ravens—National 9111
3. Do Something For Me—Dominoes—Federal 12001
4. Double Crossing Blues—Little Esther and the Robins—Savoy 731
5. Every Doggone Time—Orioles—Jubilee 5025
6. How Can You Say I Don't Care—Four Tunes—RCA 20-3967
7. I Cry My Heart Out—4 Jacks—Gotham 219
8. I'd Rather Be Wrong Than Blue—Shadows—Lee 202

9. I'd Rather Have You Under The Moon—Orioles—Jubilee 5031
 10. If You See The Tears In My Eyes—Delta Rhythm Boys—Atlantic 900
 11. I'm So Crazy For Love—Cap-Tans—Dot 1009
 12. I'm Through—Robins—Savoy 762
 13. I Will Wait—4 Buddies—Savoy 769
 14. Moonlight—Orioles—Jubilee 5026
 15. Our Romance Is Gone—Robins—Savoy 738
 16. Please Tell Me Now—Flames—Selective 113
 17. There's Rain In My Eyes—Robins—Savoy 752
 18. Those Magic Words—Ann Nichols and the Bluebirds—Sittin' In With 561
 19. Time Takes Care of Everything—Ravens—Columbia 39050
 20. With All My Love—Cap-Tans—Dot 1018
- 1951
1. Chew Tobacco Rag—Lucky Millinder—King 4449
 2. Dearest—Swallows—King 4458
 3. Eternally—Swallows—King 4501
 4. Glory of Love—5 Keys—Aladdin 3099
 5. Harbor Lights—Dominoes—Federal 12010
 6. Heartbreaker—Heartbreakers—RCA 4327
 7. Heart To Heart—Little Esther and the Dominoes—Federal 12016
 8. Hopefully Yours—Larks—Apollo 1180
 9. I Miss You So—Orioles—Jubilee 5051
 10. I'm Just A Fool In Love—Orioles—Jubilee 5061
 11. Lovin Machine—Wynonie Harris—King 4485
 12. My Reverie—Larks—Apollo 1184
 13. Simply Say Goodbye—4 Buddies—Savoy 823
 14. Skylark—Clovers—Atlantic 934
 15. Sweet Slumber—4 Buddies—Savoy 779
 16. Tabarin—4 Flames—Fidelity 3001
 17. Tell Me Why—Swallows—King 4515
 18. The Train Kept A'Rollin—Tiny Bradshaw—King 4497
 19. Where Are You—Mellomoods—Red Robin 105
 20. Who'll Be The Fool From Now On—Marshall Brothers—Savoy 825

1952

1. A Beggar For Your Kisses—Diamonds—Atlantic 981
2. A Love In My Heart—Royals—Federal 12098
3. Flame In My Heart—Checkers—King 4558
4. I Live True To You—Larks—Apollo 1194
5. I'm A Sentimental Fool—Marylanders—Jubilee 5079
6. I'm Only Fooling My Heart—Heartbreakers—RCA 4508
7. Last Call For Alcohol—Hot Lips Page—King 4584
8. Lilly Mae—Smiley Lewis—Imperial 5194
9. Moonrise—Royals—Federal 12088
10. My Song—Johnny Ace—Duke 102
11. Nights Curtains—Checkers—King 4581
12. One Mint Julep—Clovers—Atlantic 963
13. Red Sails In The Sunset—5 Keys—Aladdin 3128
14. Serve Another Round—5 Keys—Aladdin 3158
15. Waiting—Orioles—Jubilee 5082
16. When The Swallows Come Back To Capistrano—Dominoes—Federal 12059
17. Where Do I Go From Here—Swallows—King 4579
18. Why Don't I—Heartbreakers—RCA 4662
19. You're Part of Me—4 Buddies—Savoy 845
20. You Belong To Me—Orioles—Jubilee 5102

1953

1. Alone Again—5 Crowns—Rainbow 206
2. A Prisoner's Prayer—Prisonaires—Sun 191
3. Cherie—Hideaways—MGM 55004
4. Gee—Crows—Rama 5
5. Golden Teardrops—Flamingos—Chance 1145
6. Here Goes A Fool—Clovers—Atlantic 1000
7. Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me—Orioles—Jubilee 5108
8. How Would You Know—Robins—RCA Victor 5434
9. Lonely Christmas—Moonglows—Chance 1150
10. My Girl Awaits Me—Castelles—Grand 101
11. My Mother's Eyes—4 Buddies—Savoy 888
12. Nadine—Coronets—Chess 1549
13. Sunday Kind of Love—Haprtones—Bruce 101
14. The Bells—Dominoes—Federal 12114
15. These Foolish Things—Dominoes—Federal 12129

16. When I Met You—Crickets—Jay Dee 777
17. Yes It's You—Clovers—Atlantic 989
18. You Are My Only Love—Cardinals—Atlantic 995
19. You Made Me Cry—Bobby Hall and the Kings—Jax 316
20. You're Mine—Crickets—MGM 11428

1954

1. Are You Looking For A Sweetheart—Crickets—Jay Dee 789
2. Baby I Need You—Eldorados—Vee Jay 115
3. Blue Flowers—Strangers—King 4709
4. Darlene—Dreams—Savoy 1130
5. Earth Angel—Penguins—Dootone 348
6. Heaven Is The Place—Quails—Deluxe 6059
7. House With No Windows—Checkers—King 4710
8. How Deep Is The Ocean—Sultans—Duke 125
9. How Sentimental Can I Be—Mellows—Jay Dee 793
10. I Got My Eyes On You—Clovers—Atlantic 1035
11. I Used To Cry Mercy Mercy—Lamplighters—Federal 12176
12. Let's Make Up—Spaniels—Vee Jay 116
13. Love Is No Dream—Ravens—Mercury 70413
14. Maybe You'll Be There—Lee Andrews and the Hearts—Rainbow 252
15. My Heart's Desire—Opals—Apollo 462
16. Over A Cup of Coffee—Castelles—Grand 109
17. The First Time We Met—Charms—Deluxe 6065
18. The Wind—Diablos—Fortune 511
19. Untrue—Crows—Rama 29
20. Why—Oh—Rovers—Music City 750

1955

1. Always and Always—Don Julian and the Meadowlarks—Dootone 367
2. And I Need You—Pyramids—Federal 12233
3. Doctor Baby—5 Dollars—Fortune 821
4. Don't Take Your Love From Me—Calvanes—Dootone 371
5. Do Wah—Spaniels—Vee Jay 131
6. Dream of A Lifetime—Flamingos—Parrot 808
7. Dreams Come True—Strangers—King 4766
8. Eternally Yours—Barons—Imperial 5343
9. Foolish Me—Moonglows—Chess 1598

10. If Teardrops Were Kisses—Robins—Spark 110
11. I Had A Dream Last Night—Aladdins—Aladdin 3298
12. It's True—Twilighters—Specialty 548
13. My Love—5 Keys—Aladdin 3263
14. Pledging My Love—Johnny Ace—Duke 136
15. Smoke From Your Cigarette—Mellows—Jay Dee 797
16. That's Your Mistake—Otis Williams and his Charms—Deluxe 6091
17. The Way You Dog Me Around—Diablos—Fortune 518
18. Where's My Girl—Jesse Belvin—Specialty 559
19. Whispering Sorrows—Nutmegs—Herald 466
20. You Said You Loved Me—Orchids—Parrot 819

1956

1. Darling How Long—Heartbeats—Hull 713
2. Dear Lord—Continentials—Whirlin Disc 101
3. Down In Mexico—Coasters—Atco 6064
4. Dreams Of Contentment—Dells—VJ 166
5. I'm Nobody's—Turbans—Herald 478
6. It's All Over—Hawks—Modern 990
7. It Wasn't A Lie—Fitones—Atlas 1051
8. Mexico Bound—Champions—Chart 611
9. Moments Like This—Baltineers—Teenage 101
10. Now That You've Gone—Eldorados—VJ 180
11. Now We're Together—El Venos—Groove 0170
12. Off Shore—Cardinals—Atlantic 1090
13. Oh But She Did—El Capris—Bullseye 102
14. Raindrops—Inspirations—Apollo 494
15. She's Gone, Gone—Penguins—Mercury 70799
16. The Closer You Are—Channels—Whirlin Disc 100
17. The Way You Look Tonight—Jaguars—Aardell 11
18. When I'm With You—Moonglows—Chess 1629
19. Wonderful Girl—5 Satins—Ember 1008
20. You Gave Me Peace of Mind—Spaniels—VeeJay 229

1957

1. Carol—Schoolboys—Okeh 7090
2. Close Your Eyes—Pretenders—Whirlin Disc 106
3. Darling—Dubs—Gone 5002
4. Darling Please Forgive Me—Screamin' Jay Hawkins—Okeh 7084

5. Fallen Angel—Hurricanes—King 5018
6. Florence—Paragons—Winley 215
7. How You Lied—Cufflinks—Dootone 413
8. I Found My Love—Velvetones—Aladdin 3391
9. In Your Dreams—Strollers—States 163
10. I.O.U.—Spaniels—VeeJay 246
11. Louie Louie—Richard Berry and the Pharoahs—Flip 321
12. Lucille—Little Richard—Specialty 598
13. My Only Love—Falcons—Falcon 1006
14. Please Send Me Someone To Love—Moonglows—Chess 1661
15. Run Along Baby—Premiers—RCA 6958
16. Sad Sad Hours—Moroccos—United 207
17. So Why—Bopchords—Holiday 2608
18. Tears In My Eyes—Tru-Tones—Chart 634
19. This Could Be The Night—Velours—Onyx 515
20. You Must Be True—El Venos—Vik 0305

1958

1. Angel—Gay Knights—Pet 801
2. Do You Wanna Dance—Bobby Freeman—Josie 835
3. For Your Precious Love—Impressions—Falcon 1013
4. Give Me Your Love—Columbus Pharoahs—Esta 784
5. Heart's Desire—Avalons—Unart 2007
6. Heavenly Angel—Satellites—Class 234
7. Here Is Why I Love You—Spaniels—VeeJay 290
8. I Lost You—Spaniels—VeeJay 264
9. I Need Your Tenderness—Chanters—Deluxe 6162
10. Kiss and Make Up—Crowns—R&B 6901
11. Lovers Never Say Goodbye—Flamingos—End 1035
12. Marsha—Prodigals—Falcon 1011
13. My Confession of Love—Donnie Elbert—Deluxe 6161
14. Now Darling—Capistranos—Duke 179
15. Ten Commandments of Love—Harvey and the Moonglows—Chess 1705
16. The Fires Burn No More—Chesters—Apollo 521
17. Twilight Time—Platters—Mercury 71289
18. Vanishing Angel—Preludes—Cub 9005
19. Well—Olympics—Demon 1508
20. You Cheated—Shields—Tender 513

1959

1. Dry Your Eyes—Dells—VeeJay 324
2. Fingerprints—Sonny Fulton and the Mixmasters—Sunbeam 125
3. Gold Will Never Do—Luther Bond and the Emeralds—Showboat 1501
4. Gone So Long—Invictas—Jack Bee 1003
5. Guess Who—Jessie Belvin—RCA Victor 7469
6. In The Rain—Joylarks—Snag 107
7. Island of Love—Sheppards—Apex 7750
8. I Want You So Bad—James Brown and the Famous Flames—Federal 12348
9. Love Call—Ebonaires—Lena 1001
10. Lover Come Home—Eastmen—Mercury 71434
11. My Heart's Desire—Fabulous Pearls—Dooto 448
12. Please—Meadowlarks—Original Sound 03
13. Shout—Isley Brothers—RCA Victor 7588
14. So Fine—Fiestas—Old Town 1062
15. Steady Vows—Fortunes—Top Rank 2019
16. There Goes My Baby—Drifters—Atlantic 2025
17. This Broken Heart—Sonics—Harvard 922
18. Walk With The Wind—Fidelitys—Sir 274
19. Where Are You—DeVours—Moon 105
20. You're So Fine—Falcons—Flick 001

1960

1. A Million To One—Jimmy Charles—Promo 1002
2. Charlena—Sevilles—JC 116
3. Come On Baby—Cordovans—Johnson 731
4. Dream—Monotones—Hull 735
5. Gun Slinger—Bo Diddley—Checker 965
6. Honest I Do—Innocents—Indigo 105
7. If I Knew—Cruisers—V-Tone 207
8. Image of A Girl—Safaris—Eldo 101
9. Lonely Guy—Gallahads—Delfi 4137
10. Lost Lover—Cameos—Dean 504
11. Lovely Way To Spend An Evening—Masters—Bingo 1008
12. Once Upon A Time—Rochell and the Candles—Swinging 623

13. Picture of My Baby—Uniques—Peacock 1695
14. Shop Around—Miracles—Tamla 54034
15. So Blue—Vibrations—Checker 954
16. Stay—Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs—Herald 552
17. The Decision—Enchanters—Sharp 105
18. This Magic Moment—Drifters—Atlantic 2050
19. What's The Matter—El Torros—Duke 321
20. Who Will Be The One?—Del Royals—Minit 610

1961

1. A Little Bit of Soap—Jarmels—Laurie 3098
2. Bewildered—James Brown and the Famous Flames—King 5442
3. Blue Moon—Marcel's—Colpix 186
4. Everybody Pony—Teddy and the Continentals—Richie 1001
5. Every Once In Awhile—Debonaires—Dore 592
6. Forgotten Spring—Martells—Cessna 477
7. Help Me—Twilighters—Ricki 907
8. I'm In The Mood For Love—Chimes—Tag 445
9. I'm Your Fool Always—Sentimentals—Minit 803
10. I Want You—Celebrities—Music Makers 101
11. Let's Drink A Toast—Larks—Sheryl 338
12. Lover's Island—Blue Jays—Milestone 2008
13. Magic—Ideals—Paso 6402
14. Raindrops—Dee Clark—VeeJay 383
15. Some Kind of Wonderful—Drifters—Atlantic 2096
16. Those Oldies But Goodies—Little Caesar and the Romans—Delfi 4158
17. To Be Loved—Pentagons—Donna 1337
18. Underwater—Frogmen—Candix 314
19. Wait A Minute—Coasters—Atco 6186
20. You're On Top—Untouchables—Liberty 55335

1962

1. After You—Sweeties—End 1110
2. A Golden Tear—Vocaleers—Twistime 11
3. A Love Only You Can Give—Universals—Shepard 2200
4. Been A Long Time—5 Quails—Harvey 114
5. Darling I'll Be True—Interludes—King 5633
6. Do You Love Me—Contours—Gordy 7005

7. Everyone Has Someone—Hank Blackman and the Killers—Brent 7030
8. If You Want To—Carousels—Gone 5118
9. I Love You—Volumes—Chex 1002
10. I Need Your Love—Enchanters—Epsom 103
11. I Need Your Loving—Don Gardner and Dee Dee Ford—Fire 508
12. Lookin' For A Love—Valentinos—Sar 132
13. Make It Easy On Yourself—Jerry Butler—VeeJay 451
14. Need Your Love—Metallics—Baronet 2
15. No Not Again—Jive Five—Belton 2019
16. Oh My Angel—Bertha Tillman—Brent 7029
17. Village of Love—Nathaniel Mayer and the Twilights—Fortune 545
18. We're In Love—Creations—Penny 9022
19. White Cliffs of Dover—Versatiles—Peacock 1910
20. You Can't Judge A Book By The Cover—Bo Diddley—Checker 1019

1963

1. Baby Baby—Hootenaires—Enjoy 2003
2. Crack Up Laughing—O'Jays—Little Star 124
3. Cry Baby—Garnet Mimms and the Enchanters—United Artists 629
4. Don Juan—Starr Brothers—Cortland 104
5. Forever—Marvelettes—Tamla 54077
6. Hello Stranger—Barbara Lewis—Atlantic 2184
7. Hey Girl—Freddie Scott—Colpix 692
8. High On A Hill—Scott English and the Accents—Spokane 4003
9. How Can I Forget—Ben E. King—Atco 6256
10. My Heart Can't Take It No More—Supremes—Motown 1040
11. Nursery Rhymes—Nino and the Ebb Tides—Mr. Peeke 123
12. Prisoner of Love—James Brown—King 5739
13. Rainbow—Gene Chandler—VeeJay 486
14. So Much In Love—Tymes—Parkway 781
15. The Bounce—Olympics—Tri-Disc 106
16. The Further You Look The Less You See—Temptations—Gordy 7015

17. Wedding Song—Fabulaires—Chelsea 103
 18. When I Grow Older—Butlers—Guyden 2081
 19. You Hurt Me—Channels—Hit 700
 20. Your Love (Is All I Need)—Silhouettes—Junior 993
- 1964**
1. Baby I Need Your Loving—4 Tops—Motown 1062
 2. Come See About Me—Supremes—Motown 1068
 3. Dancin' In The Street—Martha and the Vandellas—Gordy 7033
 4. Every Little Bit Hurts—Brenda Holloway—Tamla 54094
 5. Funny—Joe Hinton—Backbeat 541
 6. Goin Out Of My Head—Little Anthony and the Imperials—DCP 1119
 7. Here's A Heart—Diplomats—Arock 1004
 8. I Can't Escape From You—5 Keys—King 5877
 9. I Just Don't Know What To Do With Myself—Tommy Hunt—Scepter 1236
 10. I'll Cry Tomorrow—Serenaders—V.I.P. 25002
 11. I'm On The Outside Looking In—Little Anthony and the Imperials—DCP 1104
 12. I'm So Proud—Impressions—ABC 10544
 13. I've Got No Time To Lose—Carla Thomas—Atlantic 2238
 14. My Guy—Mary Wells—Motown 1056
 15. School Bells To Chapel Bells—Styles—Josie 920
 16. That's When It Hurts—Ben E. King—Atco 6288
 17. The Little White Cloud That Cried—Soothers—Port 70040
 18. The Way You Do The Things You Do—Temptations—Gordy 7028
 19. Where Did Our Love Go—Supremes—Motown 1060
 20. You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'—Righteous Brothers—Philles 124
- 1965**
1. Don't Have To Shop Around—Mad Lads—Volt 127
 2. Heart Full of Love—Invincibles—Warner Brothers 5495
 3. I Can't Help Myself—Four Tops—Motown 1076
 4. I Do Love You—Billy Stewart—Chess 1922
 5. I Know Why—Springers—Way Out 2699
 6. I'm So Jealous—Chilites—Blue Rock 4007
 7. I'm The One Love Forgot—Manhattans—Carnival 509

8. It Ain't No Big Thing—Radiants—Chess 1925
9. I've Been Loving You Too Long—Otis Redding—Volt 126
10. Mustang Sally—Sir Mack Rice—Blue Rock 4014
11. My Girl—Temptations—Gordy 7038
12. Never Could You Be—Impressions—ABC 10710
13. Nowhere To Run—Martha and the Vandellas—Gordy 7039
14. Ooh Baby Baby—Miracles—Tamla 54113
15. Second Hand Love—Jamecos—Jameco 2004
16. Stay In My Corner—Dells—VeeJay 674
17. Stop! In The Name of Love—Supremes—Motown 1074
18. This Can't Be True—Eddie Holman—Parkway 960
19. Tracks of My Tears—Miracles—Tamla 54118
20. Yes I'm Ready—Barbara Mason—Arctic 105

1966

1. Are You Lonely For Me—Freddie Scott—Shout 207
2. But It's Alright—J.J. Jackson—Calla 119
3. Can I—Manhattans—Carnival 517
4. Falling In Love With You—Impressions—ABC Paramount 10761
5. Got No One—Delacardos—Atlantic 2368
6. Hold On! I'm Comin'—Sam and Dave—Stax 189
7. I Fooled You This Time—Gene Chandler—Checker 1155
8. I'm Losing You—Temptations—Gordy 7051
9. I'm Your Puppet—James and Bobby Purify—Bell 649
10. I've Got My Baby—Hytone—A-Bet 9415
11. I've Got To Go On Without You—Van Dykes—Mala 530
12. My Lover's Prayer—Otis Redding—Volt 136
13. My World Is Empty Without You—Supremes—Motown 1089
14. Never Let Me Go—Van Dykes—Mala 539
15. Reach Out I'll Be There—4 Tops—Motown 1098
16. Tell It Like It Is—Aaron Neville—Parlo 101
17. The Stars—Ocapellos—Checker 1144
18. What Becomes of the Broken Hearted—Jimmy Ruffin—Soul 35022
19. When A Man Loves A Woman—Percy Sledge—Atlantic 2326
20. You Waited Too Long—5 Stairsteps—Windy C 601

1967

1. Baby Baby Please—Timothy Wilson—Buddah 19
2. Get On Up—Esquires—Bunky 7750

3. Heart and Soul—Incredibles—Audio Arts 60007
 4. Hypnotized—Linda Jones—Loma 2070
 5. I Call It Love—Manhattans—Carnival 533
 6. I'll Work It Out—James Crawford—King 6130
 7. I Second That Emotion—Miracles—Tamla 54159
 8. It's You That I Need—Temptations—Gordy 7065
 9. Keep Your Love Strong—Webs—Atlantic 2415
 10. Love Power—Sandpebbles—Calla 141
 11. Nine Pound Steel—Joe Simon—Sound Stage Seven 2589
 12. Oo-Oo, I Love You—Dells—Cadet 5574
 13. Testify—Parliaments—Revilot 207
 14. The Whole World Is A Stage—Fantastic Four—Rictic 122
 15. What Am I—Gifts—Ballad 6004
 16. When We're Made As One—Manhattans—Carnival 527
 17. Yesterday—Ray Charles—ABC 11009
 18. You Can Do Me Some Good—Coronadas—Bright Star 157
 19. Your Precious Love—Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell—Tamla 54156
 20. Your Unchanging Love—Marvin Gaye—Tamla 54153
- 1968
1. Court of Love—Unifics—Kapp 935
 2. Does Your Mama Know About Me?—Bobby Taylor and the Vancouvers—Gordy 7069
 3. Fool For You—Impressions—Curtom 1932
 4. Grazin In The Grass—Hugh Masekela—Uni 55066
 5. Hangin On—Joe Simon—Sound Stage Seven 2608
 6. I Ain't Got To Love Nobody Else—Masqueraders—Bell 733
 7. I Can Give You Love—Diplomats—Dynamo 122
 8. I Guess That Don't Make Me A Loser—Brothers of Soul—Boo 1004
 9. I'm Without A Girl—Mighty Marvelows—ABC 11073
 10. I've Got Dreams To Remember—Otis Redding—Atco 6612
 11. I've Got to Have You—Fantastic Four—RicTic 139
 12. La-La Means I Love You—Delfonics—Philly Groove 150
 13. Let Me Down Easy—Little Milton—Checker 1208
 14. Look Over Your Shoulder—O'Jays—Bell 704
 15. Please Return Your Love To Me—Temptations—Gordy 7074
 16. River of Tears—Gene Chandler—Checker 1199
 17. Sugar—Jive Five—Musicor 1305

18. The Shadow Of Your Love—5 Steps—Buddah 35
19. Too Much Pride—Persians—ABC 11087
20. To The One I Love—Brenda and the Tabulations—Dionn 507
1969
1. Baby I'm For Real—Originals—Soul 35066
2. Didn't You Know—Gladys Knight and the Pips—Soul 35057
3. Gotta Find My Way Back Home—Jaggerz—Gamble 226
4. I Do—Moments—Stang 5005
5. I'm Just An Average Guy—Masqueraders—AGP 108
6. Into My Life—Precisions—Atco 6643
7. It's So Hard—Gene and Eddie—Rujac 201
8. Just Another Lonely Night—Fantastic Four—Soul 35065
9. Love Is Blue—Dells—Cadet 5641
10. Nobody But You Babe—Clarence Reid—Alston 4574
11. Only The Strong Survive—Jerry Butler—Mercury 72898
12. Say It—Masqueraders—AGP 114
13. The Echo—Epsilons—Stax 0021
14. The Ice Cream Song—Dynamics—Cotillion 44021
15. The Time Will Come—Whispers—Soul Clock 107
16. Think About Tomorrow—Ethics—Vent 1001
17. What Would I Do—Dynamics—Cotillion 44038
18. Who's Gonna Help Me Now—Vibrations—Neptune 19
19. Why Should We Stop Now—Natural Four—ABC 11205
20. You Are the Circus—C and the Shells—Cotillion 44024

Appendix Two:

Selected Albums— An Inexpensive Way To Enjoy Rhythm&Blues

Appendix one lists some of the greatest 45 rpm singles ever made. No effort was made to compensate for the fact that many of them are nearly impossible to find on their original labels; still others have never been reissued by any record company. The author realizes that many readers will be interested simply in listening to the music and not in paying a small fortune in order to own one or two very rare items. The most economical means of doing so is to buy albums containing some of these rarities. I will list some of the best albums, trying at the same time to fairly represent the three major eras. Just as there are rare "singles" there are also rare albums. Inasmuch as my intent is to introduce the less sophisticated reader to the painless enjoyment of recorded R&B, I will avoid the mention of these. Some of the older albums listed here are no longer being pressed, but there are enough of them that most of the larger shops still have a few copies.

Sweet 'N Greasy—Imperial LM-94005

You'll find this one mostly sweet. Contains very old (1949-1957) and mostly unreleased masters from Imperial, Aladdin, and Score. Features the Sha-Weez, Savoy, Robins, Jewels, and Pelicans. There are 3 or 4 extremely interesting cuts by unknown groups. Listen to *Is It Too Late*—Fidelitones, *I Miss You* and *Love Me*—Avalons, and *Dear Lori*—Shades. Some interesting (though not entirely factual) data appear on the inside cover.

Bunch of Goodies—Chess 1441

A sample of some of the best group stuff put out by

Chess up to about 1959. If you're looking for variety, this may not be the answer because the Moonglows are featured on no less than 7 cuts.

Flamingo Serenade—End 304

A dozen great ballads. Some of their finest on End. Also includes their rendition of *Where Or When*, and 2 or 3 others that were never released on 45's.

The Chantels—End 301

The most widely acclaimed of the female groups. This album contains *He's Gone*, *Maybe*, *I Love You So*, *Whoever You Are*, and *Every Night*, among others.

Blasts From The Past—Blast 6803

The best feature of this album is variety. A good balance between fast and slow songs, and artists with widely differing styles. Most of them originally recorded from 1954 to 1958. One drawback is that there are only 12 cuts. Featured are: Spaniels, Harptones, Imperials, Ike and Tina, and Desires.

Rhythm 'N Blues—End Of An Era—Imperial 94003

Fourteen rare (or unissued) and delightful slices of wax from Imperial and Aladdin vaults. Very old tracks from approximately 1952 to 1956. Features little known groups like Sharptones, Kidds, Bees, Dukes, and Pelicans.

Alan Freed's Memory Lane—End 314

Features the actual voice of the man who was known as the "King of rock 'n roll." Fourteen cuts, all of which were big hits. If the Rock And Roll Era could be fairly represented on one album, this is it.

The Flamingos Meet The Moonglows—Vee Jay 1052

Sixteen fine tracks that represent some extremely old (*circa* 1953) and rare material done before either group scaled the heights of popularity.

Collectors Showcase—Constellation 3

This one features the Flamingos, duplicating some of the material on Vee Jay 1052. Contains 14 cuts, all of the sides the group made for Chance Records, *circa* 1953.

Eighteen King Size Rhythm And Blues Hits—Columbia 9467 (stereo), 2667 (mono).

This is a real potpourri of old hits originally put out by the King Record Company. Features Dominoes, Midnighters, Five Royales, Wynonie Harris, James Brown, and others. Back of the album contains some interesting, if not entirely factual notes about each of the featured artists.

The Fabulous Cadillacs—Jubilee 1045

Twelve cuts, all of which originally appeared on Josie around 1955 or 1956. If you think R&B singers are not talented, then *I Wonder Why* will change your mind. Some other noteworthy cuts are: *Speedoo*, *You Are*, *No Chance*, and *Sympathy*.

Collectors Showcase—Constellation 5

Very old and very rare sides by the 5 Echoes, 5 Bluenotes, and 5 Chances. Contains 14 cuts. *Beating of Our Hearts*—5 Bluenotes, and *Lonely Mood*—5 Echoes are 2 of the better cuts.

Fortune's Treasure Chest—Fortune 8011

Contains 12 of the finest examples of the famed basement sound. Featured artists include: 5 Dollars, Creators, Swans, Earthquakes, Centurys. Most of these sides are quite difficult to find on singles.

Greatest Hits From The Beginning—Tamla 254

An attractively packaged album of the Miracles' greatest hits. The Tamla-Motown people were nice enough to include some early material originally released on other labels.

Mary Wells: Greatest Hits—Motown 616

Features some of the sweet soul sounds that kept Motown on its feet during the early years. Her sound is very listenable.

History of Rhythm And Blues—Atlantic

Volume 1 (The Roots, SD 8161) contains very old material culled chiefly from the Atlantic files. There are a few classic blues items and some great and rare sounds by the Clovers, Delta Rhythm Boys, Cardinals, Orioles, and Ravens. Spans the years 1947-1952.

Volume 2 (The Golden Years, SD 8162) has more great group cuts. The back of the album contains some interesting information. In fact, the same is true for the other volumes in this series.

Volume 3 (Rock and Roll, SD 8163) covers an era during which Atlantic became a powerhouse. Some of the artists featured are: the Drifters, Coasters, Ivory Joe Hunter, and Clyde McPhatter.

Volume 4 (The Big Beat, SD 8164) covers the period from 1958 to 1960. The Coasters, Ray Charles, Carla Thomas, and Clyde McPhatter are among those doing their thing on this LP.

The Temptations Greatest Hits—Gordy 919

A "boss" album by one of the top groups of the Soul Era. Made before lead David Ruffin went out on his own.

Diana Ross and the Supremes Greatest Hits—Motown 663

If you like femme soul this is the epitome.

Four Tops Greatest Hits—Motown 662

Another top soul group that kept the shekels flowing into Motown coffers. As the title suggests, the album contains most of the sounds that made them famous.

The Unavailable 16 Hits of Yesteryear—Vee Jay 1051

Most of these tracks originally appeared on Vee Jay about 1955-56. Among these: *Up On The Mountain—Magnificents*; *Dreams of Contentment—Dells*; *Mother's Son—Delegates*. A great version of *Red Sails In The Sunset* done by the Spaniels was released only on this album. Some other great cuts include *Down The Aisle of Love—Quintones*, *Newly Weds* and *You Said You Loved Me*, by the Orchids.

The Teenagers Featuring Frankie Lymon—Gee 701

Many young adults will remember *Why Do Fools Fall In Love*, one of the giants of the Rock And Roll Era. This album has *I'm Not A Know It All* and most of their big hits on Gee. Also has a couple of unreleased cuts you may like.

Jerry Blavat Guess What?—Crimson 501

Jerry (Geater with the heater) Blavat narrates on this one. A good variety of group vocals made during the Rock And Roll Era. Some of the better cuts are: *Please Be My Love Tonight—Charades*; *Never Let You Go—5 Discs*; *I Know, I Know—Pookie Hudson*; *For All We Know—Jackie and the Starlights*.

We Are The Imperials Featuring Little Anthony—End 303

Their best album. Has their big hits on End label plus some unreleased stuff. You'll love *Two People In The World*, *When You Wish Upon A Star*, and *Tears On My Pillow*.

Charlie Apple Presents 16 Grooves For Collectors Only—Pantomime 999

There are a few good cuts here, and many of them do not appear on other albums. I recommend *Walking In The Rain—Kacties*, *I'm So In Love—Roxy and the Day-chords*, and *Silver Bells—Zircons*.

Little Richard's Grooviest 17 Original Hits—Specialty 2113

Specialty has no less than 5 LP's by Richard Penniman, including one called *Little Richard: His Biggest Hits*. Insist on *Grooviest 17* though, because you get more for your money. The other LP's have only 12 cuts apiece. Among others the album contains *Lucille*, *Long Tall Sally*, *Rip It Up*, *Tutti Fruitti*, and *Good Golly, Miss Molly*.

This Is How It All Began, Volume II.—Specialty 2118

The tunes on this LP were made and released during the Rock And Roll years. Some of the artists featured are: Jesse and Marvin; Tony Allen and the Champs; Little Richard; Larry Williams; and Sam Cooke.

Doo Wop—Specialty 2114

Some pretty fair group stuff here. *Sweet Breeze* by the Phantoms, *Wheel of Fortune* by the Four Flames, and *Our School Days* by the Monitors are noteworthy ballads. Other artists include Larry Williams, The Chimes, Marvin and Johnny, Jimmy Liggins.

Lee Andrews And The Hearts—Lost Nite LP-101

Includes many of their greatest hits. You'll probably remember *Teardrops*, *Long Lonely Nights*, and *Try The Impossible*. If you liked any or all of these, you'll love Lee's plaintive style and the fine support provided by his group on *Maybe You'll Be There*, *Lonely Room*, and *Just Suppose*.

Jerry Blavat Presents For "Lovers Only"—Lost Nite LP 102

Some very pretty ballads on this disc, representing the late fifties and early sixties for the most part. Included are selections by artists like Lenny Welch, The Jesters, Click-ettes, Sheppards, Carousels, and Arthur Lee Maye.

Blavat's drivel detracts only a little from what is otherwise a fine album.

Jerry Blavat Presents "For Collectors Only"—Lost Nite LP 103

Several nice cuts among the 12 on this LP, although most of them are not extremely hard to find on singles. Good variety of artists, such as: Drifters, El Capris, Versatiles, Silhouettes, and Robins. This album leans heavily in the uptempo direction.

Oldies But Goodies. Volume I—Original Sound 5001

Good variety and some fine artists represented here. R&B classics like *In The Still of the Night*, *Eddie My Love*, *Confidential*, and *Earth Angel* are done by original artists. This was one of the first "oldies" albums to appear on the market.

Oldies But Goodies Volume II—Original Sound 5003

More greats on this album. Twelve cuts featuring such as *Devil or Angel*, *Goodnight My Love*, *Story Untold*, and *Glory of Love*.

Oldies But Goodies. Volume III—Original Sound 5004

Six ballads and six jumps on this LP. Among the ballads are: *Lovers Never Say Goodbye*, *You Cheated*, and *This is My Story*. The jumps include: *Come Go With Me*, *At My Front Door*, and *Sea Cruise*.

Oldies But Goodies. Volume IV—Original Sound 5005

More big selling classics here. Includes *Silhouettes*, *A Casual Look*, *To The Aisle*, *Money*, and *Love is Strange*.

Johnny Ace Memorial Album—Duke LP 71

This album contains the material that made Johnny famous. Some great ballads like *Still Love You So*, *Pledging My Love*, *Never Let Me Go*, and *Saving My Love for You*.

The Moments—Stang 1000

A fine male group with a very “now” sound, the Moments do most of their hits on this album. You’ll remember *Love On A Two Way Street*, *Not on the Outside* and *I Do*.

The Manhattans Doing Their Best Things—Upfront 120

A badly neglected soul group, the Manhattans have been on the scene since 1965 with only a few hits to show for it. There are only 10 cuts on this album, but they include some of the group’s finest.

Modern Sounds In Country and Western Music—ABC 410

Ray Charles at his best. Includes *You Don’t Know Me*, *Half As Much*, and *I Can’t Stop Loving You*.

The Dells—Stay In My Corner—Upfront 103

This LP will give you an idea of what the group sounded like in the late fifties and early sixties. Contains the original version of *Stay In My Corner*, the beautiful *Dreams Of Contentment*, *Dry Your Eyes*, and several other Vee Jay tracks.

Golden Memories of the Past—Musictone 7000

Album contains only 12 cuts, but there are some interesting sounds here, particularly if you dig the New York “bompity bomp” style. There are also some ballads like *Once In Awhile* by the Chimes and *Sweetest One* by the Crests.

Impressions Greatest Hits—ABC 515

Just like the title says, except you’ve got to remember that they’ve had some big ones since the LP was released. You’ll like *Gypsy Woman*, *It’s All Right*, *I’m So Proud* and *Keep On Pushing*, among others.

Aretha’s Gold—AT 8227

If you like Lady Soul, this is the album, because it contains many of her big hits for Atlantic.

Love Is Blue—Cadet LP 829

This album will give you a good idea of what the Dells have been puttin’ down since about 1965. Named for their hit single, it also has the new version of *Oh What A Night* and several other refreshing interpretations of old standards.

Unbeatable Sixteen Hits of James Brown—King LP 919

This should give you an accurate impression of the pre-1963 James Brown. Several great ballads here, including *Try Me*, *I Want You So Bad*, and *I’ve Got To Cry*. I couldn’t really choose from among eight to ten albums that show off the post-1963 Brown. If you’re interested they’re all on King except one or possibly two.

Encore Of Golden Hits (by the Platters)—Mercury MGS 60243

Some hits that are bound to bring back memories of the late fifties are: *The Great Pretender*, *Twilight Time*, *Enchanted*, and *One In A Million*. This is the original group with Tony Williams.

A Collection Of Sixteen Original Big Hits. Volume VII—Motown LP 661

They’re not all big hits but most of them are pretty good. A variety of artists here, but all of them in the Motown bag. The Temptations score with *Ain’t Too Proud To Beg*, while the Elgins, Stevie Wonder, Tammi Terrell, Martha and the Vandellas, and Marvin Gaye are also tastefully presented. This is the best LP in a series that is consistently good, but not great.

Junior Walker And The All Stars Greatest Hits—Soul LP 718

Junior Walker blowin’ his brains out on *Shotgun*, *Pucker Up Buttercup*, *Home Cookin*, and many others.

Memphis Gold Volume II—Stax 726

This album will give you some conception of what the famous Memphis sound is all about. The Barkays, Carla Thomas, William Bell, and the immortal Otis Redding headline the cast.

The History of Otis Redding—Stax 418

Some of Otis' best efforts preserved forever on this LP. *I've Been Loving You Too Long* is my favorite, but there are a lot of good numbers here.

Jackie Wilson's Greatest Hits—Brunswick BL 54140

Once again the title is suggestive of the content. All-time great Jackie Wilson sings the songs that made him famous. The original tracks of Jackie's *Lonely Teardrops*, *Doggin Around* and many more.

The El Dorados—Vee Jay LP 1001

In case you don't already know, the El Dorados were one of the most respected groups of the Rock Era. *At My Front Door* was their biggest hit, and *Now That You've Gone*, *A Fallen Tear*, and *There In The Night* are all fantastic. This LP will soon become rare, so grab it.

Spotlight On Hank Ballard—King 740

Hank Ballard and the Midnighters work out on some of their hits of the early sixties. On this album you'll find *Let's Go*, *Let's Go*, *Let's Go*, *The Hoochi Coochi Coo*, a pretty ballad called *I'm Thinking Of You*, and several other well-known tunes.

Clovers—Atlantic AT 8009

This album is a storehouse for the many fine sounds originating with this great group. The tunes were cut before 1957, and included are: *Little Mama*, *Crawlin*, *Devil Or Angel* and *Ting A Ling*.

Love Ballads (Clyde McPhatter and the Drifters)—Atlantic AT 8024

Some of the finest records ever made by the original group appear here. They appeared between 1953 and 1956. *Bip Bam* and *Lucille* are two of the better ones.

Best Of Percy Sledge—Atlantic AT 8210

If you like warm, tender soul ballads, Percy is your main man. His biggest hit, *When A Man Loves A Woman*, tops the list, but there are some other very nice interpretations by the down-home crooner.

The Best Of Joe Tex—Atlantic AT 8144

Joe Tex has developed a unique style through the years. He is a genius when it comes to talking to his listener, as he does in the middle of some of these cuts.

Index

- Ace, Buddy, 142
Ace, Johnny, 40, 56, 103,
107, 138-142
Acey, Johnny, 142
Acklin, Barbara, 236
Adams, Faye, 106
Adams, Marie, 142
Admirals, 100, 128
Aiken, Ben, 214
Aladdins, 142
Alexander, Arthur, 181
Allen, Tony, 158, 177
Ambassadors, 217
Ambers, 158
Angels, 151
Aquatones, 166
Arabians, (Lawrence), 224
Arrows, 110, 153
Arthur and Booker, 112
Artisticks, 100, 227
Ascots, 177
Avalons, 114, 129
Baby Sitters, (Baby Huey),
220
Baker, Lavern, 117
Balladiers, 95, 97, 133
Ballads, 230
Banks, Darrell, 227
Bar-Kays, 181, 231
Barons, 44, 56, 98
Bartley, Chris, 229
Bell, Archie, (The Drells), 23,
77, 233, 237, 266
Bells, 122
Bell, William, 181, 232, 239
Beltones, 50
Belvin, Jesse, 40, 55, 56, 110,
200
Benton, Brook, 239
Berry, Chuck, 2, 53, 109, 151,
155, 235
Berry, Richard, (Dreamers,
Pharoahs), 107, 115, 204
Bill Haley and the Comets,
113
Billy Bunn and his Buddies,
69, 77, 104
Billy Williams Quartet, 66, 69,
Blenders, 104, 109
Blendtones, 171, 182
Bluebells (Patti Labelle), 179
Bluebirds, 95, 118
Blue Jays, 103
Bobbettes, 171
Bonds, U.S., 2, 178, 269
Booker T. (the M.G.'s), 180
Bopchords, 158
Brenda and the Tabulations,
229-230
Brown Dots (Deek Watson),
68, 94
Brown, James, 21, 25, 26, 30,
58, 79, 89, 155, 189, 190,
204, 211, 235, 241, 246-
253, 266, 268
Brown, Maxine, 173
Brown, Roy, 35, 73, 81, 113
Brown, Ruth, 77, 117
Buddies, ("Butchie" Saunders)
152
Burke, Solomon, 55
Butler, Jerry, 77, 104, 181-
182, 214, 225, 237
Cabineers, 105
Cadillacs, 44, 207, 221
Caesars, 228
Capris, 44, 79, 171
Cap-Tans, 98, 110
Cardinals, 63, 87, 94, 99, 105
Carl and Charles, 112
Carols, 123
Carousels, 159

Carr, James, 76
 Carter, Clarence, 184, 232
 Carter Rays, 95, 104
 Cashmeres, 4, 104, 155
 Castelles, 44, 152
 Cats and the Fiddle, 94
 Cellos, 161
 Censations, (Mike and), 231
 Chairmen of the Board, 87
 Champions, 111
 Chandler, Gene, 40, 183, 234
 Channels, 154, 159, 181
 Chanteclairs, 98
 Chantels, 63, 118, 159, 170
 Chanters, 153
 Charioteers, 54, 69, 97
 Charles, Ray, 25, 30, 51, 58,
 76, 78, 103, 179, 182, 211,
 231, 256
 Charms (Otis Williams) 112-
 113, 140, 158, 222, 242
 Charts, 158, 184
 Checker, Chubby, 54, 166
 Checkers, 33, 100
 Cherokees, 152
 Chessmen, 86
 Chestnuts, 37
 Chi-Lites, 215, 231, 239
 Chimes, 173
 Chords, 53, 111
 C, Johnny, 4, 230
 Clark, Dee, 183, 195
 Cleftones, 7, 71, 151
 Clickettes, 171
 Clovers, 14, 94, 99, 104, 140,
 153, 157
 Coasters, 116
 Cole, Ann, 110
 Collegians, 157
 Collier, Mitty, 239
 Colts, 114
 Columbus Pharoahs, 4
 Conley, Arthur, 82, 230
 Continentals, 112, 154
 Contours, 86, 178, 244
 Cooke, Sam, 56, 77, 78, 160
 218
 Cooper, Les, 184
 Copesetics, 116
 Coronets, 3, 43, 102, 109,
 114, 128
 Corvetts, 4, 231
 Counts, 44, 98
 Covay, Don, 82, 204-209
 Credence Clearwater Revival,
 55, 226
 Crests, 114, 164, 222
 Crickets, 108, 140
 Crows, 34, 43, 63, 88, 105
 Cruisers, 167, 225
 Crystals, 176-177
 Cubans, 153
 Cubs, 152
 Cufflinks, 166, 170
 Cymbals (Lee Williams), 217
 Danderliers, 104
 Danleers, 52, 104, 163
 Dappers, 128
 Davis, Tyrone, 267
 Daychords, 175
 Daylighters, 177
 Deccors (Marie), 162
 Delfonics, 43
 Dells, 22, 29, 30, 42, 44, 50,
 59, 77, 82, 86, 108, 109,
 220-221, 222, 224, 254-
 259, 256-267
 Dell-Vikings, 4, 98, 114, 156
 Delphonics, 232-233, 238, 267
 Del Rios, 170
 Del Stars, 222
 Delta Rhythm Boys, 69, 119
 Deltas, 159
 Desires, 166

Destineers, 181
 Detroit Wheels (Mitch Ryder),
 226
 Devaurs, 170
 Diablos, 16, 33, 47, 69, 112
 Diamonds, 103, 135
 Diddley, Bo, 57, 103
 Distant, 243
 Dixie Cups, 213
 Doc Starkes and the Night-
 riders, 56
 Dominoes, 95, 97, 98, 99,
 100, 107, 123, 140, 204,
 254
 Dominoe, Fats, 2, 96, 196
 Dorsey, Lee, 181
 Downbeats, 151
 Dreamers, 121
 Dreamlovers, 55, 184
 Drifters, 42, 51, 63, 94, 107,
 122, 135, 161, 168, 211,
 215-216, 254, 259
 Dubs, 5, 159, 170
 Dukes, 115
 Dynamics, 79, 234
 Earls, 53
 Earthquakes, 47
 Ebony Moods, 117
 Edsels, 166
 Elbert, Donnie, 40
 Eldorados, 37, 50, 108
 Electras, 216
 Elegants, 173, 269
 Elgins, 43
 Eltones, 162
 El Venos, 114
 Emanons, 157, 235
 Emory and the Dynamics, 239
 Empires, 115, 154
 Enchanters, 95, 117, 216
 Endeavors, 240
 Epps, Preston, 166
 Epsilons, 181
 Equations, 234
 Escorts, 116
 Esquires, 43, 86, 230
 Ethics, 237-238
 Everett, Betty, 214
 Evergreens, 117
 Expressions, 215, 221
 Extensions, 182
 Extremes, 184
 Falcons, 86, 94, 102, 104,
 167, 179
 Fantastic Four, 86, 213, 240
 Fascinators, 53, 166
 Feathers, 110
 Federals, 181
 Fidelities, 110
 Fifth Demension, 77, 235,
 267
 Five Bars, 69
 Five Bluejays, 75
 Five Bluenotes, 113
 Five Budds, 105
 Five Chances, 104, 113
 Five Crowns, 63, 87, 168
 Five Diamonds, 117
 Five Dollars, 47
 Five Dutones, 184
 Five Echoes, 78, 108, 113
 Five Flytes Up, 267
 Five Hearts, 107
 Five Jets, 45
 Five Keys, 48, 95, 125-132,
 184, 204
 Five Kings, 94
 Five Pearls (Pearls), 114, 162
 Five Roses, 171
 Five Royales, 43, 55, 60, 62,
 75, 100, 110, 187-192
 Five Satins, 44, 52, 55, 153,
 162, 169, 221
 Five Sharps, 95

- Five Stairsteps, 222-223, 231
 Five Wings, 100, 142
 Flairs (Rams, Chimes), 107, 110, 200, 201, 204
 Flamingos, 32, 44, 54, 63, 103, 110, 113, 166, 175, 227
 Florescents, 177
 Floyd, Eddie, 181
 Ford, Frankie, 106
 Forrest, Earl, 139, 142
 Four Blues, 100
 Four Buddies, 42, 44, 54, 87, 98, 100
 Four Dots, 102
 Four Fellows, 116
 Four Flames, 102
 Four Jacks, 97, 110
 Four Knights, 69
 Four Rockets, 95
 Four Seasons (4 Lovers), 179-180, 223-224
 Four Tops, 77, 84, 85, 88, 214, 267
 Four Tunes, 69, 94, 95, 101, 117
 Four Vagabonds, 100
 Franklin (Aretha, Erma, Carolyn), 30, 33, 40, 77, 78, 87, 88, 90, 94, 208, 228-229, 237, 240, 268
 Frazier, Joe, 238
 Freeman, Betty, 176
 Freeman, Bobby, 161-162
 Friends of Distinction, 237
 Fuller, Johnny, 142
 Fulton, Sonny, 40
 Gant, Cecil, 73
 Gassers, 115
 Gaye, Marvin, 40, 178, 204-210, 214, 239
 Gayten, Paul, 233
 Gene and Eunice, 117, 154
 Genies, 167
 Gladiolas (Zodiacs), 156-157
 Goldentones, 109
 Good Guys (Doug Robertson), 219
 Harlemaires, 94
 Harmonaires, 158
 Harptones, 79, 109, 151, 162, 167, 174, 269
 Harris, Bobby, 218, 224
 Harrison, Wilbert, 181, 184
 Harris, Wynonie, 33, 35, 54, 60, 73, 74, 81, 113
 Hawkins, Sam, 142
 Hawks, 75
 Headliners, 37
 Heartbeats, 63, 69, 151, 153, 157, 220
 Heartbreakers, 101
 Hearts, Baby Washington, 110, 236/Lee Andrews, 155, 159
 Hemlocks, 181
 Hendricks, Bobby, 107, 236
 Henry, Clarence "Frogman," 10, 220
 Herbs, 239
 Hideaways, 104
 Holiday, Jimmy, 227
 Holland, Eddie, 84
 Hollywood Flames, 158
 Hollywood Saxons, 181
 Holman, Eddie, 37
 Hornets, 104, 110, 153
 Houston, Joe, 115
 Hughes, Jimmy, 184
 Hunter, Ivory Joe, 53, 99, 104
 Hurricanes, 100
 Ideals, 219
 Impressions, 32, 59, 91, 108, 112, 173, 182, 204, 211, 222, 244, 267
 Impressors, 163

- Incredibles, 266
 Indigos, 237
 Inkspots, 46, 47, 67-71, 75, 81, 88, 119, 122
 Inspirators, 117
 Intruders, 225, 267
 Isley Brothers, 58, 86, 159, 169, 173, 236, 268
 Ivytones, 166
 Jacks, 160
 Jackson, "Bullmoose," 46, 74
 Jackson, Chuck, 156, 173
 Jackson Five, 223, 238, 240, 267
 Jackson, J.J., 219
 Jackson, "Jump," 94
 Jackson, Walter, 232
 Jaggerz, 225
 Jaguars, 158, 166
 James, Etta, 40, 77, 232
 Jayhawks, 37, 44, 153
 Jerry-O, 224
 Jesters, 157, 166
 Jewels, 53, 113
 Jive Five, 158, 174, 269
 Johnnie and Joe, 159
 Jones, Jimmy, 63, 162
 Jones, Linda, 214
 Jones, Tom, 82, 91
 Joplin, Janis, 240
 Juveniles, 153
 Kenner, Chris, 177
 King, Ben E., 56, 215
 King Curtis, 212
 Kings, 79, 110
 Kings and the Queens, 184
 King, Willie, 142
 Kittens, 175
 Kodoks, 153, 181
 Kool and the Gang, 268
 Kool Gents, 108
 Ladders, 158
 Lamplighters, 36, 110, 111, 155
 Lance, Major, 183
 La Rells, 4
 Larks, 100, 117, 123, 216, 219
 Laurels (Bobby Relf), 107, 115
 Leaders, 116
 Leavill, Otis, 240
 Lewis, Barbara, 256
 Lewis, Bobby, 174
 Lewis, Jerry Lee, 161
 Liggins, Jimmy, 94
 Little Anthony, (Imperials, Chesters, Duponts), 153, 157, 166, 178, 185, 213
 Little Esther, 97, 180
 Little Jan (Radiants), 173
 Little Richard (Tempo Toppers), 77, 78, 100, 151, 157, 161, 173, 185, 192-199, 207, 246, 248
 Logics, 184
 Los Pop Tops, 91, 219, 235
 Lovenotes, 158
 Lovettes, 217
 Lyrics, 157
 Mad Lads, 41, 63, 181
 Magictones, 100
 Magnificents, 108
 Maharajahs, 115
 Maidens (Sir Joe), 180
 Main Ingredient, 237
 Majors, 102
 Manhattans, 63, 217
 Marcells, 114, 174
 Marchan, Bobby, 106, 225
 Markees, 207
 Marshall Brothers, 121
 Martinels, 182
 Marvin and Johnny, 111, 112, 160

- Marylanders, 95
 Mason, Barbara, 216-217
 Mastertones, 79
 Maye, Arthur Lee (Crowns),
 56, 57, 115, 180
 McGriff, Edna, 95, 134
 McHugh, Jimmy, 182
 McPhatter, Clyde, 77, 99, 107,
 155, 204, 216, 248
 Meadowlarks, 114, 166, 200,
 214-215
 Medallions, 161, 170, 180,
 200
 Mel and Tim, 234
 Mello Kings, 53
 Mellomoods, 101
 Mellows, 109, 118
 Memories, 222
 Metallics, 178
 Meters, 221
 Mickey and Sylvia, 114, 154,
 234
 Midnighters (Royals), 54, 60,
 75, 77, 100, 102, 110, 134,
 163, 166, 188, 207
 Midnights, 111
 Mighty Hannibal, 221
 Mighty Magnificents (Willie),
 234
 Milburn, Amos, 54
 Millinder, Lucky, 68
 Mills Brothers, 46, 66, 69, 70
 Milton, Roy, 74, 94, 269
 Miracles, 30, 32, 51, 84, 87,
 171, 182, 204, 232, 243,
 267
 Moments, 235, 240
 Mondellos, 157, 161
 Monotones, 10, 220
 Montclairs, 116, 222
 Monterey, 162
 Moonglows, 3, 102, 109, 113,
 155, 163, 176, 204, 207
 Moonlighters, 103
 Neville, Aaron, 2, 227
 Nightingales, (Ollie), 235
 Nitecaps, 55, 114, 128, 155
 Nobles, Cliff, 230
 Nutmegs, 58, 166, 167, 175,
 222
 O'Jays, 237, 259-264
 O'Kaysions, 236
 Olympics, 172, 214
 One Hundred Proof Aged In
 Soul, 240
 One Hundred Twenty Fifth
 Street Candy Store, 41
 Orchids, 63
 Orientals, 166
 Originals, 177, 213, 228
 Orioles, (Sonny Til), 42, 54,
 70, 94, 95, 97, 102, 109,
 126, 132-137, 237, 239
 Otis, Johnny, 269
 Page, "Hot Lips," 46
 Paragons, 157, 166
 Passions, 168
 Pastels, 10
 Peaches and Herb, 154, 227
 Peacocks, 103
 Penguins, 88, 104, 112, 115,
 140, 166, 199-204
 Phil and Harv, 177
 Pickett, Wilson, 30, 40, 58,
 74, 79, 82, 83, 91, 94, 167,
 211, 231, 268
 Pips (Gladys Knight), 86, 181,
 184, 213, 224
 Platters, 70, 71, 104, 107,
 111, 115, 117, 157, 163,
 201, 227, 248
 Plurals, 111
 Preludes, 162
 Presidents, 240
 Presely, Elvis, 69, 76, 81-83,
 91, 107, 108, 114, 155,

- 160, 266
 Pretenders, 154, 158, 162,
 177
 Prisonaires, 44, 78, 109
 Profiles, 234
 Purify (James and Bobby), 86
 Quadrells, 154
 Quails, 44, 176
 Queens, (Shirley Gunter), 107
 Quintones, 170
 Radcliffe, Jimmy, 237
 Radiants, 32, 58, 86, 202-203,
 216, 219
 Rainbows, 204-208
 Ravens, 10, 42, 51, 70, 93,
 95, 97, 100, 104, 118, 119-
 125, 133, 136, 220
 Rays, 109
 Red Caps (Steve Gibson), 93
 Redding, Otis, 56, 76, 141,
 180-181, 192, 219, 231,
 232
 Rhythm Aces, 86
 Rhythm Kings, 100
 Rice, Sir Mack, 215
 Ricks, Jimmy, 110, 119, 122,
 123, 133
 Righteous Brothers, 226, 227
 Rivals, 100
 Rivieras, 164
 Rivileers, 71, 110, 114, 216
 Robert and Johnny, 112
 Robins, 75, 97, 116
 Romancers, 161-162
 Ross, Jackie, 40, 86
 Roulettes, 158
 Rovers, 142
 Royal Holidays, 56
 Royals, 75, 100, 163
 Roy C, 224
 Ruffin (Jimmy and David),
 86, 181, 213, 224
 Ryder, Junior, 142
 Sam and Dave, 112, 181, 189,
 268
 Sandmen, 163
 Sandpebbles, 86, 219
 Satintones, 171
 Scaletones, 109
 Scarlets, 181
 Schoolboys, 100, 153
 Scott, Freddie, 40, 224
 Sensations, 116
 Sentimentalists, 69
 Sepianaires, 99
 Sequins, 166
 Serenaders, 10
 Shadows, 95
 Sha Na Na, 35
 Sharp, Dee Dee, 225
 Shep and the Limelights, 56,
 220
 Sheppards, 100, 108, 117,
 167, 230
 Shields, 98
 Shirelles, 54, 55, 164, 170
 Shirley and Lee, 154, 167
 Silhouettes, 161
 Simon, Joe, 172, 231
 Sinceres, 233,
 Six Teens, 115
 Skyliners, 53, 164, 222
 Sledge, Percy, 40, 88, 223
 Sly and the Family Stone, 42,
 235, 266
 Smith, Huey "Piano," 106
 Solitaires, 101, 176, 213, 237,
 269
 Soul Changers, 239
 Spaniels, 44, 54, 79, 108, 110,
 173, 204, 219, 224, 229
 Sparrows, 109
 Spinners, 26, 158, 176
 Starfires, 175-176

Starlings, 114, 117
 Starlites, 58, 59, 181
 Starr, Edwin, 86, 222
 Stewart, Billy, 79, 204-209
 Strangers, 100
 Striders, 100
 Strollers, 104
 Strong, Barrett, 84, 171
 Students, 153
 Suburbans, 110
 Sugartones, 102
 Sultans, 103
 Superiors, 236
 Superbs, 216
 Supremes, 30, 32, 40, 77, 85,
 86, 88, 155, 164, 175, 226,
 238, 239
 Swallows, 12, 32, 54, 58, 87,
 100
 Swans, 47
 Swingin Hearts, 173, 177
 Sycamores, 114
 Tams, 233
 Taylor, Johnny, 78, 181
 Technics, 178
 Teenagers (Frankie Lymon),
 151, 152, 223
 Teenchords, 152, 181
 Teen Queens, 170
 Tellers, 152
 Tempmentals, 158
 Temptations, 7, 30, 32, 33,
 42, 57, 58, 59, 77, 85, 86,
 112, 176, 178, 217, 222,
 241-246
 Terracetones, 166
 Terrell, Tammi, 86, 208, 239
 Tex, Joe, 106, 117
 Thomas, Rufus (and Carla),
 105, 181
 Thornton, "Big Mama," 91,
 105, 139
 Thrillers (Little Joe), 219
 Thunderbirds, 158
 Thunder, Johnny, 177
 Timetones, 114, 175
 Titones, 173
 Topics, 86
 Toppers, 56, 75, 95
 Tren-teens, 217
 Truetones, 221
 Tunedrops, 158
 Turbans, 112, 115, 166
 Turks, 115, 200
 Turner, Ike and Tina, 236,
 240
 Turner, Joe, 35, 46, 73, 74,
 113
 Twilighters, 104
 Valchords, 153
 Valentines, 159
 Vandellas (w/ Martha Reeves)
 32, 86
 Vel-Aires (Donald Woods), 115
 Velours, 162
 Velvetones, 99
 Vibraharpes, 181
 Vibranaires, 44
 Vibrations, 100, 103, 237
 Victorians, 69
 Voicemasters, 171
 Voices, 115
 Volcanos, 217
 Volumes, 178
 Vontastics, 55, 219, 231
 Walker, Junior (the All-Stars)
 21, 46, 86, 213, 218-219
 Wanderers, 162
 Warwick, Dionne, 77, 165,
 181
 Washington, Dinah, 104, 256
 Watts, Noble, 110
 Welch, Lenny, 184
 Wells, Mary, 84, 171, 214
 Weston, Kim, 86, 208
 Whalers (Hal Paige), 181

Wheels, 116
 Whips, 107
 Williams, Jerry, 219
 Willis, Chuck, 56, 76, 162-
 163
 Wilson, Jackie, 21, 23, 59, 77,
 99, 155, 160, 183, 185,
 204, 218, 248, 266, 268
 Wilson, Timothy, 40, 229
 Wonder, Stevie, 30, 40, 182
 Wood, Brenton, 232
 Young Rascals, 226, 267
 Zircons, 222

About The Author

Lynn Eills McCutcheon grew up in suburban Pittsburgh. As a high school senior in 1962, he was exposed to the rhythm and blues world by a friend who collected rare records.

After graduation from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, in 1967, he earned a masters degree from Auburn University. He served two years as Assistant Professor of Psychology at Erskine College and is currently working on a PhD in Psychology at Howard University.

Throughout these years of formal education his interest in rhythm and blues increased; his collection of rhythm and blues recordings is regarded by fellow collectors as one of the finest in the United States. He has lectured on college campuses and written articles for *Shout*, a British magazine, and *The Record Exchanger*, an American R&B publication. The column "McCutcheon's Corner" is now a regular feature of the latter.



Lynn Ellis McCutcheon, in his extensive search for the origin and development of true Rhythm and Blues, has traced, interviewed, and expounded upon the less-known artists as well as the known performers. He has expanded a hobby, exercising the influence of his formal training, in a stirring pursuit of an obscure and often mislabeled music from its beginning to its acceptance as Rhythm and Blues.

Numerous styles of music exist in the world—each an expression of the emotional circumstances which inspired it. Each is a form of communication, compatible to those who understand the life-style of the composer and the performer, and influential upon those who are compassionate to its message. The trends in music reflect the social changes which create it and the music in turn influences social change.

The author has endeavored to identify Rhythm and Blues and establish its right as an ethnic music form. While his philosophy may not represent the views of the reader or the publisher, he is hopeful that his publication will bring about a greater appreciation for Rhythm and Blues and for the performers who have struggled to make it what it is.